Provisions for the Journey

Volume 2

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point

The hadith discussed in the text is one of the most comprehensive and rewarding

exhortations of the Noble Prophet (S) to one of his most eminent companions by the .name of Abu Dharr

Foreword

In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

The invaluable legacy of the Household [Ahl al-Bayt] of the Prophet (may peace be upon them all), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource. It has given many scholars to the Muslim ummah who, following in the footsteps of Imams of the Prophet's Household ('a), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers .and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defence of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured by the partisans

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of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the frontline in .consonance with the demands of every age

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and .wholesome human nature

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to

present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shi'ah writers and those who have embraced this sublime .school of thought through divine blessing

The Assembly is also engaged in edition and publication of the valuable works of leading Shi'ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet's Household ('a) has offered to the entire .world

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the .readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating .(the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the Prophet Muhammad (S

We beseech God, the

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Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imam al-Mahdi, His vicegerent on the earth (may Allah expedite his .(advent

We express our gratitude to Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, the author of the present book, and Mr. Kelvin Lembani (Muhammad 'Abd al-'Aziz), its translator. We also thank our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially .the staff of the Translation Office

Cultural Affairs Department

The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) World Assembly

Lesson ٢٥: The Path towards Paradise and Manifestations of Divine Modesty

point

The Noble Prophet (S)(١) once more reminds us about the importance of modesty and

:decency and tells Abu Dharr

”?O Abu Dharr! Would you like to enter paradise“

”.Abu Dharr responds, “Yes, may my father be sacrificed for you

The Noble Prophet (S) mentions three fundamental conditions with the intention of :inviting Abu Dharr to heaven and eternal bliss

Cast long-drawn-out dreams out of your mind. Always perceive your death as close“ ”.at hand. Have proper modesty towards Allah

Disapproval of Long-Drawn-Out Dreams and the Difference between Them and Positive Hope

One of the subjects upon which a lot of emphasis has been laid in the hadiths is that a believer ought to abstain from long and protracted wishes. Endless desires are a hindrance to man’s fulfilling his divine duties and pursuing his spiritual goals and impel him to abandon his religious obligations and sacred aims in the hope of attaining his .cravings

Long-drawn-out dreams cause man to become heedless about the present, thus not perceive currently available opportunities. Because of the unbecoming role of endless wishes in keeping perfection and the sublime prosperity of

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The abbreviation, “S”, stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, sallallahu ‘alayhi wa -١ alihi wa sallam [may God’s blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny], which is [.mentioned after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S). [Trans

the hereafter at a far distance, the devil uses them as effective tools to mislead the :servants of Allah

إِنْ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلاَّ إِنَاثًا وَإِنْ يَدْعُونَ إِلاَّ شَيْطَانًا مَرِيدًا * لَعَنَهُ اللّهُ وَقَالَ لأَتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيبًا مَفْرُوضًا * وَلأُضِلَّنَّهُمْ وَلأُمَنِّيَنَّهُمْ...

“They invoke none but female (deities) besides Him, and invoke none but a rebellious Satan, whom Allah has cursed, and who said, ‘I will surely take of your servants a settled share, and I will lead them astray and give them false hopes…’”[1]

It is in connection with this danger of interminable yearnings and because they infect man with erroneous doubts and thereafter impel him to perpetrate minor sins and later greater sins and crimes that Imam ‘Ali (‘a)[2] perceives them as a threat:

“O people! What I fear most for you are two things—acting according to desires and extending of hopes. As regards acting according to desires, this hinders one from the truth; and as regards extending of hopes, it makes one forget the next world.”[3]

In order to differentiate between positive hope and interminable vain wishes, the notion of endless cravings ought to be explained, especially when we take into consideration the fact that the concept of ambition is somehow associated with the notion of hope and that which is the essence of life and making effort—whether in connection with material matters or spiritual issues—is positive hope.

If one were to have no hope in regard to improving his state of affairs and in worthy benefits which derive from good

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۱- Surat al-Nisa’ ۴:۱۱۷-۱۱۹.

۲- The abbreviation, “‘a” stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, ‘alayhi’s-salam, ‘alayhim’us-salam, or ‘alayha’s-salam [may peace be upon him/them/her], which is mentioned after the names of the prophets, angels, Imams from the Prophet’s progeny, and saints (‘a). [Trans.]

۳- Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon [khutbah] ۴۲, trans. Fayd al-Islam. [For English translation see http://www.al-islam.org/nahj [۹], ed.]

deeds, he would neither fulfill his worldly nor eschatological duties, and to quote the words of the Gracious Qur’an:

مَنْ كَانَ يَظُنُّ أَنْ لَنْ يَنصُرَهُ اللَّهُ فِی الدُّنْیَا وَالآخِرَهِ فَلْیَمْدُدْ بِسَبَبٍ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ لِیَقْطَعْ فَلْیَنظُرْ هَلْ یُذْهِبَنَّ كَیْدُهُ مَا یَغِیظُ

Whoever thinks that Allah will not help him in this world and the hereafter let him" extend a rope to the ceiling and cut (himself) off, and let him see whether his plan (would remove that which enrages (him)."(۱)

On the basis of this translation, when a man has no hope in the help of Allah, he is always entrapped and caught up in a state of anger, wrath, wavering of the mind and hopelessness and he is perpetually restless and anxious. As a result of this excessive lack of hope, he is not able to take steps forward towards either his own well-being or that of others. He may not commit sin and crime, but he will not take positive action either. It is for this reason that positive hope and protracted futile aspirations are .different—positive hope is the incentive for man's development in life

Hope in Allah gives fruit to rewards in the hereafter and hope in the graces of Allah is one of the ethical virtues. In this same aforementioned hadith the Noble Prophet (S) asks Abu Dharr if he would like to go to paradise; that is to say, does Abu Dharr have the hope and aspiration to go to the garden of bliss? This question drives

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۱- Surat al-Hajj ۲۲:۱۵.

home the point that hope is acceptable and praiseworthy and that which is not proper .and undesirable is interminable deceptive wishes and vain worldly cravings

Therefore, a believer is not one who is devoid of hope nor is he one who lends his faculty of reasoning to inferior worldly yearnings because this faculty is more honorable than that it should be pre-occupied with thinking about low worldly ambitions; on the contrary, his hope is totally focused on Allah and on gaining .proximity to Him

?The World: Means Or Goal

The world is not beneficial by nature. It is beneficial only to the extent that it is an

instrument or means; that is to say, man should strive for the world, but not such that the world becomes his final goal. Worldly effort should be a means of attaining the bliss of the hereafter; otherwise, if the hereafter were not the aim, ordinary worldly efforts would not have an intelligible and correct justification—even worse is a .situation where a person nurtures protracted wishes in his mind

Man's efforts in the world have to be concentrated on fulfilling his duties and obligations, whether in the domain of individual issues or in the realm of social matters, and these obligations should be done for the pleasure of Allah and success in the hereafter; otherwise, from the Islamic point of view, his endeavors and actions will not be acceptable and they will be subjected to reproach. In the same manner, placing hope in the world ought to be with the intention

.of attaining the afterworld

If man intends to make his worldly deeds a means of attaining the happiness of the hereafter, he ought to bear in mind that those worldly activities which play a role in achieving the bliss of the otherworld, and are not a hurdle to spiritual matters, are limited. For this reason, he ought not to preoccupy his thoughts and mind with worldly affairs, because the capacity of man's mind, thinking as well as creative powers, is limited: once man is preoccupied with pondering about one topic, he is hindered from .reflection about other issues

When his attention is captivated by one thing, he is held back from thinking about other matters. If round-the-clock man is absorbed in contemplating about earthly matters most of the time—he is immersed in thinking about his house, wife, food, clothing and he is obsessed with his social status and, in short, he is absorbed with that which is connected with the world—his mind becomes so preoccupied that he has no opportunity to think about the hereafter. He even dreams about worldly matters .when he sleeps

If one is a career person or a businessman, he dreams about checks and promissory

notes. Or, we see the architect that is always absorbed with building affairs and the problems of architectural work who dreams about these issues in his sleep, too. A person who has not married is preoccupied with the thought of selecting a wife, or if he is married but has no child, he

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is absorbed in thinking about having a child and with these mental preoccupations, he can no longer think about the hereafter, spiritual matters and the aim of creation and .his future

These daily duties preoccupy man's mind in such a way that he no longer has the time to accomplish his obligatory [wajib] duties, and when he is through with his daily affairs, he begins thinking about the next hundred years and what will happen to his !grandchildren and great grandchildren and all his descendants

How will his children marry and settle down? How will he make a living? Without the least doubt such a mind and heart cannot engage in thinking about spiritual matters, pains of the afterworld, diseases of the soul, cankers of the heart, nor social issues, all .of which are associated with the pleasure of Allah

It is very unfortunate and saddening that at times even spiritual matters are often used as tools for attaining the world. This is another loss and calamity for mankind. It is not surprising at all when a career person uses his income as a means for securing worldly cravings, but what is amazing is that a person might use religion as a means of securing worldly aspirations, meaning that he makes religion a trade for attaining .earthly goals

Such a person is a traitor to religion and, in the words of the hadiths, he acquires his daily bread by means of selling his religion. What a loss! How unfortunate and ill-fated is

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a person that uses his religion as a means of securing his worldly ambitions and carnal

yearnings. As one of the Infallibles ('a) has stated, the benefit of such a person from religion is equivalent to the income which he earns and he gains no other benefit from religion.

"One who makes his religion as a means of attaining worldly desires will derive no benefit from his religion but that which will lead to his perdition."(١)

Attention to the Absolute Self–sufficient Results in Freedom from Want from Other than Allah

Once a believer is set on the course of knowledge and awareness of Allah as well as executing his divine duties, he no longer thinks about his worldly affairs for the reason that Allah is his guardian, providing his earthly needs. Of course, this does not mean that he ought not to work but that he should not preoccupy his mind with the world: the trader, farmer and craftsman who undertake effort to make money do so for the sake of securing the pleasure of Allah not for the sake of merely securing their worldly desires.

Blessed is the tradesman who uses the world as means for attaining the hereafter and woe upon him who trades the hereafter to achieve only his worldly aspirations.

Definitely such a person will not attain his ambitions in life and his soul will be traumatized and full of stress all the time because, despite perceiving himself as attached to religion and familiar with it, he lacks real faith in religious and divine values, has not conformed his knowledge with his deeds and

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١- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧٨, p. ٦٣.

does not have faith in what he says.

Such a person becomes an object of Allah's wrath and Allah does not provide him with the tools and means of attaining his worldly aims. It is for this reason that we see that such people experience failures and become unsuccessful in life and neither derive

.benefit from the world nor from the hereafter

However, when a believer trudges the course of faith and sets foot on the path of propagating divine beliefs and sciences, Allah opens the way for him in connection with the life of the world and manages his life in such a way that man does not even need to think about the world and there will not be the least worry in his mind with regard to material life. As Allah stated to the Noble Prophet (S) on the Night of the :[Ascension [laylat al-mi'raj

He (Allah's servant) keeps trying to get closer to Me by means of optional prayers" [nafilah] until I love him. [After] loving him, I will become his ears with which he hears, his eyes with which he sees, his tongue with which he speaks and his hand with which he strikes. When he asks from Me I answer, and if he demands from Me I will give (him..."(۱

The chain of transmission of this authentic hadith has been recorded in books like "Al-Kafi" and its purport has also been inscribed in other hadiths. Various interpretations have been put forward for the expressions which have been

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۴, p. ۵۴, hadiths ۷-۸ -۱

recorded in this hadith, one expression being that Allah stated, "I become his ears... eyes... hands..." Eminent scholars like Shaykh Baha'i and Imam Khomeini (may Allah .be pleased with them) have put forward several interpretations in this regard

Imam Khomeini's (may Allah be pleased with him) interpretation in his book entitled "Forty hadiths" is as follows: "The more the heart is pre-occupied with all else besides Haqq (i.e. Allah) and is engaged with the edifices of the world, the more will be its need ".and longing for the world

However, the need of the heart and the longing of the soul are very apparent, because its attachment and affection to the world has filled all the corners of the

heart. It is natural that its external need too should increase because there is no person who can manage all his affairs alone. Perhaps the rich are apparently considered to be without want, but a precise glance at their affairs makes it clear that their needs increase with the increment of their riches. For this reason rich people are poor people in the semblance of the self-sufficient and they are needy people .dressed in the clothing of the affluent

The more the heart is engrossed in managing worldly affairs and the more it is absorbed with the fanfare of the world, the more man is overcome by the pain of abasement and humiliation and the more he is overwhelmed by the abysmal .darkness of disgrace and need

In contrast, once a person tramples the

inferior world underfoot and concentrates his heart and soul's attention on the Absolute Self-Sufficient and believes in the essential need [or natural poverty] of all existents and comprehends that no being is self-sufficient in and of itself and that there is no power, glory and majesty save for Allah, he becomes free from want of both worlds—so free from want that the kingdom of Solomon is worthless in his point .of view

If the keys to the treasures of the world were given to him, he would not pay any attention to them; as has been recorded in the hadith that the Archangel Gabriel brought the keys of the treasures of the world from Allah, the Exalted, to the Seal of the Prophets (S) and that holy man showed humility and did not consent to the offer and instead chose poverty as his pride.(١) Also, Imam 'Ali ('a) told Ibn 'Abbas, "This (world of yours is more inferior to me than this worn out shoe."(٢

They know that being absorbed in the treasures of the world and its wealth and riches and companionship with the lovers of the world gives rise to darkness and opacity of the heart, weakens man's will and determination, makes the heart needy and .destitute, and hinders it from concentrating on the Absolutely Perfect

However, when the heart has been put under the care of its Owner and the house has been submitted to the Landlord and has not been surrendered to a usurper, Allah manifests Himself

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١- One of the angels of Allah who had never come down to the earth descended with the Archangel Gabriel carrying the keys to the treasures of the world and addressed the Noble Prophet (S), "O Muhammad! Your Lord sends his peace and states, 'These are the keys to the treasures of the world. If you want, you can be a prophet who is poor and if you desire, you can be a prophet possessing power and a kingdom'." Then after that Gabriel made a sign to him and said, "O Muhammad! Show humility!" The Prophet (S) stated, "I will be a poor prophet." Thereafter the angel accompanying Gabriel returned to the sky... (Amali Saduq, majlis ۶۹, p.۳۶۵, hadith ۲)

٢- 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas says that when Amir al-Mu'minin set out for war with the people of Basrah, he went to his audience at Dhi Qar and saw that he was stitching his shoe. Amir al-Mu'minin said to me, "What is the price of this shoe?" I said, "It has no value now." He then said, "By Allah! It is dearer to me than ruling over you, except that I may establish right and ward off wrong." Nahj al-Balaghah, sermon [khutbah] ٣٣.

in it. Of course, the manifestation of the Absolute Self-Sufficient brings about absolute self-sufficiency and submerges the heart into the sea of honor and riches and fills it with freedom from want:

"Yet all might belongs to Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful."(١)

It is natural that once the affairs of the house are managed by the Owner of the house, He does not leave man to himself and He Himself takes possession of all the affairs of His servant and even becomes his ears, eyes, hands and legs... in this state, the poverty and need of His slave becomes completely obviated and he becomes free from want of both worlds and, of course, in this manifestation of the Haqq his fear of all existents is precluded and dread of Allah, the Exalted, takes its place and the greatness and eminence of the Haqq fills his heart to the brim. Besides the Haqq, he

(does not perceive anyone as great, eminent and possessor.(۲)

The simplest interpretation that can be put forward for the hadith which says "... I become his ears and his eyes and..." is that Allah performs the duties that the ears, eyes, hands and legs of His slave do. Allah's servants ought to do deeds which settle their material affairs and remedy their needs; but Allah arranges the daily affairs of His servants in such a way that they become automatically available and everything is put in order such that there is no need to exert pressure on one's mind

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۱- Surat al-Munafiqun ۶۳:۸.

۲- Imam Khomeini, Fourty hadiths: An Exposition of Ethical and Mystical Traditions, The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works (International Affairs Department), ۴th printing ۱۳۷۳ AHS, pp. ۴۴۴-۴۴۵.

about what will have to be done the following day.

As soon as one steps out of the house, tasks are fulfilled by the will of Allah, by means of agents which He makes available and perhaps also through other servants of Allah. Individuals need help and Allah makes that aid reach them from the unseen world ['alam al-ghayb]. It is not such that affairs are settled directly from the unseen supernatural world, but that the management of all undertakings and the capacity for all affairs lie in His Hands. Allah arranges agents and means in such a way that all affairs go well without man being in need of anything and without his needing to think and plan.

In order to advance his affairs and duties, a believer does not have need of satanic plans. Once he believes that his short term needs are provided by Allah, he no longer nurtures long-drawn-out aspirations. His task is only to fulfill the responsibilities that lie on his shoulders.

In contrast, if a person is only preoccupied with amassing riches and wealth and the acquisition of more income in order to increase worldly allurements and attractions—

changing household decorations as often as possible, buying new cars, etc.—his aspirations will not come to an end because this domain is endless and to quote Imam Khomeini (may Allah be pleased with him), "If he were given the whole of the planet earth, he would not be contented with it and would begin planning how to conquer

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and subjugate other planets as well."

Remembrance of Death and Manifestations of Divine Modesty

With regard to what has previously been alluded to, the Noble Prophet (S) has mentioned three conditions for man to enter paradise: the first condition is that man ought to curtail his aspirations, not attach his heart to the world, not worry about the future and only preoccupy his mind with the hereafter. The second condition is that he ought to remember death all the time. Referring to this condition after the first condition is indicative of the close connection between these two because one ought to think about death constantly if he intends to keep interminable hopes outside the realm of his thoughts.

The reason for this is that when one takes death into consideration, the end and consequences of worldly ambitions and their futility become apparent; therefore, there is a close relationship between wiping out endless hopes and contemplation of death.

Having hopes and aspirations are not entirely voluntary. When man is brought up in circumstances which are governed by a materialistic culture, what he sees and hears have an effect on him and the eyes and ears make him pay heed to the world. Whether he likes it or not worldly ambitions find their way to his heart.

Under the circumstances, what must one do to avoid being attracted by the allurements of the world and to refrain from long-drawn-out hopes? It is in regard to this important issue that the Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr to persistently contemplate death: if man

is continually attentive to the fact that the end of this life is death, he comprehends that this world is not a worthy place for him to attach his heart. That which is worthy of love is eternal, never ending and never decreases—and that is the pure life of the .hereafter

If man is consistently preoccupied with the thought of death, he is not afflicted by false expectations, greed and a great deal of other mean qualities. For this reason, the remembrance of death is an effective remedy for curing spiritual diseases. Paying attention to death is very easy: man can create manifestations of death in his surroundings; for example, he can hang a writing or poster about death in his room or at his place of work, or he can put it in the inner folds of a book so that he is reminded .about death by seeing it

:In a hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states

(The most intelligent person is he who meditates upon death more."(۱"

Without the least doubt, an intelligent person is not deceived and he chooses the best between the world and the hereafter. Once a clever person conceives that the world is destined to destruction, he does not believe that it is worthwhile. In any case, remembrance of death is an effective remedy for breaking free from love of the .world and interminable false hopes

The third condition for entering the garden of eternal bliss (paradise)—which was referred to in a different way in the previous lesson—is divine

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۶, p. ۱۳۰ -۱

modesty. Because the Noble Prophet (S) repeatedly alludes to the need to be decent and modest in the presence of Allah, Abu Dharr understands that the issue of modesty enjoys special status and importance, and that is the reason why the Noble

Prophet (S) continues to lay a great deal of emphasis upon it. For this reason a question arises for him about why the Noble Prophet (S) lays so much emphasis on this issue and grants it so much importance. He considers it probable that the Noble Prophet (S) has a special intention in mind, and thus asks:

"O Prophet of Allah, we are all modest before Allah. (What do you mean?)"

Because he does not consider the normal amount of modesty to be sufficient, the Noble Prophet (S) cites three manifestations of divine modesty:

"Modesty is not that which it appears to be; rather, modesty before Allah is that you must not forget the graves and ruins of former generations."

The first manifestation of divine modesty mentioned by the Noble Prophet (S) is that man should not forget graveyards and ancient constructions. Of course, the intention here is not places like decorated cemeteries which do not remind man of the hereafter, but desolate and ruined graves to which little or no attention at all is paid. Previously it was mentioned that the mind of man is limited and when he is preoccupied with one set of issues he is hindered from paying attention to others.

If man wants to produce desirable spiritual

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states like modesty, fear [khawf] and eagerness for Allah, which are considered pre-eminent in the Islamic order and emphasized in ethics, it is necessary to prepare the proper foundation: in order to bring about that level of modesty which has been alluded to in the words of the Noble Prophet (S), a person ought to forgo the allurements of the world and become affectionate towards desolate graveyards and old ruined buildings.

When man's attention is focused on grand, beautiful and attractive buildings which are being built and if every day his eyes are set upon new decorations and colorful curtains, the attractions of the world manifest themselves more and more in his eyes. If he wants to reduce a bit of this attention to the deceptive manifestations of this

world, he must turn his attention to graveyards, the destination of humanity, and the dead lying under the earth. He ought to look at ruined desolate buildings and observe what the end of stones, metal and cement which are laid one on top of the other will .be

It should not be mistakenly understood that what is meant is that we should build our houses with clay so that they fall whenever it rains. On the contrary, the order of Islam is that man ought to do every act correctly; if he is building a house, he ought to build a strong one. The intention is that man must not give his heart to the allurements and attractions of the world and

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must not be deceived by the world. The purport is not that he ought not to perform his .work correctly

Man has a duty to be earnest in his deeds, but not to fall in love with the world. When man sees the attractive beauties of the world, it is natural for his heart to be captivated by them. This state is not volitional: when he sees his neighbor has a car and exchanges it for a more luxurious car, he becomes tempted and asks himself why others should be able to exchange their cars so often while he doesn't even own a !dilapidated car

When he himself does buy a car, the following day he is tempted to buy the newest and latest model. Therefore, the Noble Prophet's (S) advice is that man ought to sometimes visit graves and desolate or ruined places. Ethical scholars, too, counsel their students to go to graves on a daily basis; at the minimum, they ought to visit graves once a week, which is recommended in Islamic law, so that their hearts become cleansed of love for the world and material affections and so that at least a .balance is struck between love of the world and the hereafter

It is not possible that man be infatuated with the world and love of the world cast a shadow over his heart and at the same time feel fear [khawf] of Allah, be an early riser for prayer and shed tears when he hears the

name of Imam al-Husayn ('a). It is natural that the world and love of it would occupy the place of these affairs. A heart that is filled with love of the world no longer has any room for love of Imam al-Husayn ('a) and Her Holiness Fatimah al-Zahra' ('a). Of course, these Infallibles ('a) are so luminous that when our dead hearts remember them, they leave an effect, but because our hearts are contaminated, their remembrance does not have the necessary effect.

"And that do not forget the stomach and that which is in it."

The second manifestation of divine modesty is that people should be careful about what they eat. If people make use of everything that falls into their hands and are not afraid of eating prohibited [haram] foods, little by little they become afflicted by hardheartedness and their hearts become devoid of divine light. People must be careful not to eat doubtful or forbidden foods which can cause hardness of the heart and from then on they do not find the inclination to worship, fear Allah, desire paradise and encounter the beatific vision [liqa'] of Allah. For this reason, in order to have divine modesty, it is incumbent to pay heed to the stomach and be cautious about the food that is placed into it. The Noble Qur'an advises man to be careful what food he eats:

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الإِنسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ

"So let man observe his food."(۱)

Man has to follow all the aspects of nutrition and examine his food from

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۱- Surat 'Abasa ۸۰:۲۴.

all points of view and take care that it is sound, hygienic, lawful [halal] and pure. The Companions of the Cave [ashab al-kahf] who, as the best of Allah's servants, had forsaken the polytheistic order and idol worship and liberated themselves from the

trap of atheistic beliefs during the reign of Diqyanus, according to the saying of the Qur'an, used to select the purest and most lawful [halal] of foods. After narrating the events that came to pass for the Companions of the Cave in the grotto and their waking up from sleep after a hundred years and the course of their conversation, the :Glorious Qur'an states

فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَيُّهَا أَزْكَى طَعَامًا فَلْيَأْتِكُم بِرِزْقٍ مِنْهُ ...

Send one of you to the city with this money. Let him observe which of them has the" (purest food, and bring you provisions from there."(۱)

It is in view of the effects of unlawful possessions in misleading man and keeping him aloof from what is right and in propelling him towards sinning against Allah and against the saints [awliya'] of Allah that Imam al-Husayn ('a) said to the atheistic army :when they did not listen to his words

All of you are sinning and disobeying me and opposing my orders and are not" listening to my words. Yes, your stomachs are filled with haram food and a seal has (been put over your hearts."(۲)

Yes, haram food impels a person to be so hard-hearted and cold-hearted that he even becomes ready to pull out a sword against the

p: ۲۱

۱- ۱۸:۱۹ Surat al-Kahf.

۲- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۴۵, p. ۸.

son of the Noble Prophet (S). It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) believes that modesty is guaranteed by man being careful about what he eats and eating halal .foods

And that he ought to control the head and its parts." (That is to say, the eyes, the ears" (.and the tongue

The third manifestation of divine modesty is that man ought to observe the thoughts and ideas he nurtures in his mind and the hopes and dreams that exist therein. If he purifies his imagination, casts null and void thoughts out of his brain and also embarks .upon purifying his inner self, he can attain desirable modesty

Neatness, A Practice of the Saints [Awliya'] of Islam

:In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states

Any human being who desires nobility and dignity in the hereafter has to give up the" ornaments of the world. Whenever you have done this, you have attained the station ".of the friend of Allah

When man has detached his self from the world and has become heedless with regard to it, he falls in love with the hereafter and its unending blessings and yearns to encounter the beatific vision [liqa'] of Allah and he becomes beloved and honorable in the hereafter. In contrast, if the world appears great in the sight of man, the .hereafter appears small from his point of view

Of course, reflecting about the hereafter, death and going to the graves is effective; however, man has to think well also in regard to his conduct. In order not to fall into the trap

of the world, he ought to rid himself of its ornaments and attractions, in which case he .will become honorable and dignified in the hereafter

It must be stated, however, that some adornments are recommended, so much so that if man pursues them, because of their religious desirability, not only is he not considered to be a seeker of the world but a pursuer of the hereafter. It is religiously desirable and recommended in divine law that a wife should beautify herself for her husband and that the husband ought to do the same for his wife, and it is recommendable for believers in gatherings to wear clean clothes, perfume themselves, brush their teeth, comb their hair and apply oil to their bodies. Believers

.must be so clean that people delight in socializing with them

Beyond the shadow of doubt if these affairs are done with the intention of gaining nearness and proximity to Allah, they are considered to be worship and not counted as ornamentation for the world. Ornamentation for the world takes place when a human being beautifies himself for the sake of carnal desires and in order to derive .pleasure from it and not for the sake of Allah and the hereafter

Man likes to wear stylish and fashionable clothes, to eat delicious and diverse foods, and to have a beautiful and grand house. Such adornment is desirable if it is done for the sake of the hereafter and for conforming to the orders of Allah. The Noble

:Prophet (S) used to consistently clean and perfume himself

The Noble Prophet's (S) habit was such that he used to look at himself in the mirror,“ clean his head and face, and comb his hair and often he did this with water. Besides doing this in front of his family, he used to groom himself in front of his companions too and say, 'Allah loves the servant who cleans and adorns himself when going out of (his house to visit his brothers'.”(١

A believer ought to be clean and have an orderly outward appearance all the time; he ought not to be disheveled and dirty because this results in other people being disgusted with him. In the past there used to be dirty, soiled carpets in mosques and some people used to enter them with grimy clothes and smelly bodies and, in .contrast, places of moral corruption used to be clean and perfumed

The assemblies of the believers ought to be the best, cleanest and most fragrant places of gathering. We must imitate the way of the Noble Prophet (S) and adopt the .conduct of the Infallible Imams ('a) as our role models

A considerable amount of the Noble Prophet's (S) income used to be spent on buying perfume. We ought to take lessons and know that these ornamentations and adornments are not undesirable, for the reason that they are orders of the divine law

and, if they are performed with the intention of gaining nearness to Allah, they are considered to

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.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۶, p. ۳۳۰ -۱

be worship. The wisdom underlying these injunctions is that the believers become affectionate towards each other, derive pleasure from one another and get benefit .from the light of each other

Lesson ۲۶: The Role of Pure Supplication and Meritorious Deeds

point

This section of the Noble Prophet's (S) counsels is in connection with supplication of Allah, the need to conform supplication to proper deeds and the invaluable role of a righteous individual in the home and society. Beyond a shadow of doubt supplication or appealing to Allah is one of the manifestations of devotional service and sincere obedience to Allah and in this regard a great deal of the verses of the Gracious Qur'an .and hadiths have been recorded and detailed discussions have been held

The Concept of Supplication

In regard to the meaning of supplication, the late Raghib Isfahani has said, "Supplication is similar to calling out or evocation, with the difference that in calling out sometimes 'O….!' and other terms besides that are used and a name does not accompany it; but supplication is used in circumstances where a name is brought, like 'O so and so!' of course evocation and supplication are sometimes used (interchangeably."(۱

The late 'Allamah Tabataba'i has said, "Supplication by Allah, the Exalted, is of two types: existential [takwini] and institutional [tashri'i] (or revealed divine law)." Existential denotes bringing into being something which Allah has willed, as if that :thing which he has willed is being summoned or called. Allah, the Exalted, states

يَوْمَ يَدْعُوكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيبُونَ بِحَمْدِهِ وَتَظُنُّونَ إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً

The day He calls you forth, you will“

.Raghib Isfahani, Mufradat, under maddah da‘awa -۱

(respond to Him, praising Him, and you will think that you remained only a little.”(۱

However, institutional supplication of Allah, the Exalted, implies that by means of the verses of the Glorious Qur’an, He charges people with the duty to accept His religion, but the supplication of a slave of Allah denotes that the slave attracts and acquires the mercy and grace of the Lord by means of devotional service and obedience to .Him

It is for this reason that in reality worship is tantamount to supplication because the servant places himself in the station of servitude and connection to his Lord by means of his invocation (with a feeling of dependence on Allah and a feeling of lowliness and humility) so that he may attract Allah’s attention to himself because of His Sovereignty and Lordship, and this is what supplication means. The word of Allah :alludes to this same meaning

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمُ ادْعُونِی أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِی سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ

And Your Lord says: Call Me, and I will answer you! Indeed those who are disdainful“ (of My worship will enter hell in utter humility.”(۲

In this verse Allah has first used the expression ‘Call Me’ (which is equivalent to .’supplicate or invoke Me) and then after that He has employed the term ‘worship

It ought not be mistakenly understood that the meaning of hearing and responding to the supplication of the invoker is that whatever he asks for at whatever time will be granted to him. Such an interpretation

.Surat al-Isra' ۱۷:۵۲ -۱

.Surat al-Mu'min (or Ghafir) ۴۰:۶۰ -۲

of the acceptance and granting of supplication is not compatible with religious explanations. All too often what the invoker supplicates for is not in his good interests and granting his request harms him, because he is not aware of what is expedient for .him

:In his will to his son, Imam 'Ali ('a) states

Then he has placed the keys of His treasures in your hands in the sense that He has" shown you the way to ask Him. Therefore, whenever you wish, open the doors of His favor with prayer and let the abundant rains of His mercy fall on you. Delay in acceptance of the prayer should not disappoint you because the granting of prayer is according to the measure of your intention. Sometimes acceptance of prayer is delayed with a view to its being a source of greater reward to the asker and of better .gifts to the expectant

Sometimes, you ask for a thing but it is not given to you, and a better thing is given to you later or a thing is taken away from you for some greater good because sometimes you ask for a thing which contains ruin for your religion if were to be given to you. Therefore, your request should be for things whose beauty should be lasting and whose burden should remain far from you. As for wealth, it will not last for you (and may bring harm to you in life and in the hereafter."(۱

Differences among People in Supplication and Requests

In regard to man's incentive in

.Nahj al-Balaghah, pp. ۹۲۴-۹۲۵, letter no. ۳۱, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

supplication and why so much emphasis has been laid on invocation of Allah, it ought to be said in brief that the path towards man's perfection is devotional service to Allah

and one of the manifestations of servitude to Allah is that man ought to present his .needs only to Allah and ask Him only to grant them

The truth is that people are different in regard to their levels of devotion and their stations of service to Allah, and their needs too are varied: the needs of those who are at the lower levels of knowledge and faith and are at the beginning of the path towards perfection are materialistic. When they request a thing from Allah, their needs are worldly—they request more sustenance, healthy children, a good wife, a .grand house, provision of the needs of life and other things of this nature

Of course, for a human being that is at the lower levels of faith and has not attained the higher levels of divine knowledge, it is very proper that he request these same material needs from Allah instead of asking for higher needs. In reality his requests from Allah are indicative of the fact that he has faith in Allah and believes that Allah is .able to grant him his needs

It is for this reason that he extends his begging hand to Allah and not to human beings. It is natural that if he requests these very needs from Allah, He will grant his needs

:(because Allah Himself told Prophet Moses ('a

O Moses! Ask for all your needs from Me, even the fodder for your sheep and the salt" (for your bread dough."(١

Man's perfection lies in the fact that in order to secure needs, whether material or spiritual, he ought only to ask from Allah and from no one other than Him and not believe in the effectiveness of any other save Allah; otherwise, if one requests from :any other save Allah, Allah will render him hopeless. Imam al-Sadiq ('a) says

Allah, the Exalted, states, 'I swear upon My honor, glory, greatness and the dignity of" the Throne that I render futile and unachievable the hope of anyone who puts their faith in anyone save Me and I make him wear the dress of disgrace among the people

and keep him far from My proximity and My graces. He puts his hope in other than Me when he is in difficulty, in spite of the fact that I am the One who sends problems, and he puts his faith in all else other than Me, and in his imagination he knocks on the door of everyone save My door regardless of the fact that the keys to all the closed doors are in My possession and the door of My house is open to any person who calls upon Me'."(۲)

Unfortunately, a lot of our supplications and invocations are not real, that is to say we do not ask Allah in spite of the fact that the

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۹۳, p. ۳۰۳.
۲- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۱۰۷.

real effecter is Allah and it is proper that man ought to only present his requests to Him.

However, when man has a need, he goes to see a person who will solve his problem. If he wants money, he extends his hand to someone who will give him money and/or he goes to look for a job from which he can earn an income, but a true believer initially sets his heart on Allah and presents his request to Him and then takes recourse to other human beings as a result of duty and because Allah has made worldly agents a means of attaining our needs and not because we are independent and self-sufficient.

In any case, man's perfection, faith and awareness of Allah are increased to the extent that man's heart is attentive to Allah and asks the Divine Essence to remedy his needs. We cannot fathom the invaluable alchemy and precious elixir that being attentive to Allah is and how effective asking for material and worldly needs from Allah is on the perfection of man's soul.

The late 'Allamah Tabataba'i used to narrate that his instructor the late Ayatullah Mirza 'Ali Aqa Qadi used to say, "Sometimes man is heedless of Allah and Allah afflicts

that servant for some time with hardships and encumbrances in order to compel him to say one 'Ya Allah (O my Allah!)' because this 'Ya Allah' is very effective on man's soul and gives fruit to the illumination of the soul."

With regard to

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what has been said, it becomes clear how effective paying attention to Allah is in illuminating the heart and in elevating man's soul and how much it can aid him in progressing and advancing towards perfection even in circumstances where he does not feel a great need.

Of course, man does not comprehend this fact and he ought not to comprehend completely because this cosmos is a place of examination and if the effects of everything completely manifested themselves in this world, the examination would not take place as is befitting. Some things should remain hidden in order for the test to be administered in the best possible form.

For this reason man must never forget Allah and he ought to request everything, including his material needs, from Him. Man must know that his supplication—even for material needs—and his attention to Allah is tantamount to acknowledgement of his servitude and recognition of the Lordship of Allah and this attention in asking one's needs from Allah is effective for the perfection of the soul.

It will be that much greater if one's awareness grows and faith increases and a person supplicates for spiritual needs in addition to material affairs and he invokes Allah to grant him the grace to perform acts of worship, the opportunity to acquire knowledge, the ability to serve mankind and the power to abstain from sin. Above and beyond this, is supplication for others including friends, neighbors, classmates, believers and every person who has a right upon us,

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such as teachers.

Higher than this group are human beings who are so preoccupied by praising and adoring Allah, the Exalted, at the time of supplication that they are prevented them from asking for their own needs. When they want to supplicate for their needs, they remember the divine attributes of His glory and beauty and engage in praising and adoring their Lord and do not become satiated no matter how much they praise Allah. It is for this reason that there remains no opportunity for them to request anything for themselves. A man who is in love, whose eyes are fixed on his beloved and is absorbed in the beauty of his darling does not see himself so as to ask for anything for .himself

People who have attained this level of knowledge still feel that Allah, the Exalted, wants the effects of servitude and devotional obedience to manifest themselves in all their limbs and members and in all the aspects of their being, just as one of the effects of devotional service and obedience to Allah is that man ought to place his forehead on clay as a sign of humility and submission in the presence of Allah. Other effects of devotional servitude include tears of enthusiasm for the glory of Allah, tears due to fear of the greatness of Allah that flow from the eyes, and the trembling of the heart; in the same way, in addition to the rest of the limbs and members of the body, the

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effects of humility must be manifested on the tongue and one of the effects of obedience and devotional servitude to Allah is that a slave ought to request a thing .from his Lord

The Importance of Manifesting Indigence and Incapacity in the Presence of Allah

When man perceives that Allah, the Exalted, wants him to manifest his servitude with all his being and all his physical and inner powers, he ought to know that he must show his incapacity and humility by means of his tongue and present his request to Allah and that this begging and asking is a sign of lowliness in the presence of the .Lord

Those who have tasted the sweetness of this neediness towards Allah know what

glory and honor it brings to hand. Indeed, those who have attained the highest levels of gnosticism and awareness still feel that they must invoke Allah in supplication and make the effects of servitude flow on their tongues, this manifestation of servitude is .worship and it is relevant

Allah wants man to manifest poverty and indigence in His presence and it is natural that once all the limbs and members of man are consistently conformed in the course of devotional service to Allah and in discharging commendable deeds—for example through supplication to Allah by means of the tongue—man will attain desirable results because all his limbs and powers are consistent with one another. When he supplicates, it is as though he is requesting and asking the Divine Presence with all his being and it is natural that the expansive mercy of Allah

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:has encompassed him

وَإِذَا سَأَلَکَ عِبَادِی عَنِّی فَإِنِّی قَرِیبٌ أُجِیبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ...

And when my servants ask you about Me, [tell them that] I am indeed near. I answer" (the supplicant's call when he calls Me..."(١

In supplication man asks for something from Allah and He too grants it to the human being, but for the person who has tasted the love of Allah and the enjoyment of prayer as intimate dialogue with his Lord, the greatest pleasure is that when he says .'('Ya Allah (O my Allah)', in response to him it is said 'Labbayk (Here I am

However, when a person's heart is directed towards Allah alone and he is not attentive to anyone else, Allah grants him when he requests. A human being ought to ask for all his needs from Allah; he must ask for his bread from Allah when he is hungry and show poverty and indigence to the Absolute Self-sufficient with all his :being, and like Prophet Moses ('a), say

... رَبِّ إِنِّی لِمَا أَنزَلْتَ إِلَیَّ مِنْ خَیْرٍ فَقِیرٌ

(O my Lord! I am indeed in need of any good You may send down to me."(۲)..."

Prophet Moses ('a) said this after fleeing from Egypt and heading towards Midian when he had no food and no house to sleep in. At night he slept on the ground in the desert and ate herbage due to intense hunger. As Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"If you want, I will, as a second example, relate to you concerning Moses ('a)

۱- Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۸۶.
۲- Surat al-Qasas ۲۸:۲۴.

the Interlocutor of Allah, when he said, 'O my Lord! I need whatever good You may grant me.' (Qur'an ۲۸:۲۴) By Allah, he asked Him only for bread to eat because he had nothing to eat save the herbs of the earth, and the greenness of the herbs could be seen from the delicate skin of his belly due to his thinness and the paucity of his flesh."(۱)

Moses ('a) found his way to Midian after escaping from Egypt. One day he saw a group of people busy drawing water from a well and two girls by the side waiting for the men to finish drawing water and go aside so as to find the opportunity to draw water for their sheep. Moses ('a) approached those two girls and asked, "Why have you come here?" When he heard why they were there, he felt pity for them as a result of which he drew water for them and satiated their goats.

Thereafter, the two girls went away without giving him anything. After a while, one of the two girls returned and said, "My father wants you to go to him so that he may compensate you for helping us." When Moses ('a) went to Shu'ayb (Jethro), the father of the girls, Shu'ayb married one of his daughters to Moses ('a) and thereafter material life, wife and children, ease and peace were secured for Moses ('a).

Yes, if a person asks for something from the deepest recesses of his heart from Allah, He

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۵۰۷, sermon [khutbah] ۱۵۹, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

bestows upon him. It is not necessary for a person to recite long and detailed supplications and spend much time on supplication—it is enough for him to request his needs with his entire being from Allah so that He may grant his invocation. However, when a person recites supplications, even long and detailed supplications, and his heart is fixed on other than Allah, his invocations are not effective. If, in addition to preparedness of the heart, man has commendable deeds, his supplications are .granted even faster

The Need to Conform Supplication to Commendable Deeds

Perhaps the reason why the supplication of people who commit indecent deeds is not granted and why they are not successful in their requests from Allah is that they do not have complete attention to Allah. This is because improper deeds cause one to fall in love with other than Allah and perhaps also become fond of something that is hated by Allah. In this case, how is it possible for such a person to turn to Allah? People who acquire pure and complete attention to Allah are those whose deeds are decent and :proper and far from corruption. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Supplication accompanied by good and proper deeds is enough to the“ ”.extent that salt is necessary for food

In the same way that for food a specific amount of salt is necessary and there is no need for extra, supplication too is enough to that same measure for a person who has good and

proper deeds. In reality invocation is the spice of life of a person who seeks .prosperity

For this reason, it is not necessary for such a person to supplicate and present his

requests to Allah constantly and when that person makes a request, Allah responds to it. For those who do not have commendable deeds and do not help other people, it is not clear whether invocation is beneficial to them even if they supplicate a lot; in order :to make this issue more clear, the Noble Prophet (S) said

O Abu Dharr! The similitude of a person who supplicates much without performing" ".good deeds is like that of a person who shoots an arrow without a bow

A person who invokes Allah a lot but does not perform his duties correctly is aware of the value of supplication and is truthful in his entreaty and truly has a request from Allah, but he does not act upon his duties in regard to other matters and the effects of devotional service do not become manifested in his personal conduct. He is negligent in connection with his eyes and ears and the other limbs of his body and in reality he is .obedient to the carnal soul and the devil

Such a person, however, ought not to be devoid of hope in Allah, for Allah is more benevolent than to drive a person who comes to knock on His door away without any response. Nevertheless, the condition of such an individual is very

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different from that of a person whose entire conduct and deeds show the effects and manifestations of devotional service to Allah and who traverses the path of servitude to his Lord with all his being and is not negligent even for one moment in regard to .discharging his duties and serving mankind and the Creator

The similitude between the supplication and request of these two individuals is that of two people who want to hit a target with an arrow but when one wants to throw his arrow he does so with his bare hands. The distance it will cover will be much less and it will not hit the target as is intended. However, the other puts his arrow in the bowstring and then shoots and it covers a longer distance and hits the target. The example of a person who supplicates but does not perform good deeds is like that of a person who throws his arrow without a bow. Without any doubt the distance covered .by his arrow will be much less

From what has been said, the status and role of supplication in the life of man has become clear and it has become apparent that invocation of Allah is like salt which is added to food. The life of man ought to be filled with devotional service and worship of Allah whether in relation to personal and individual matters, in connection with his .household, neighbors and in relation with the society and the creatures of Allah

The

effects of devotional service to Allah have to become manifest in the conduct and deeds of man. In the meanwhile, he also ought to invoke Allah for the reason that this very supplication is an effect of servitude to Allah which manifests itself on the tongue (and without the least doubt requesting and attention ought to arise from the deepest .(recesses of the heart

The other point that has become clear from the explanation of the Noble Prophet (S) is that man through good and decent deeds attains his goals very quickly and, when he invokes Allah, he is like that person who shoots the arrow by means of the bow and his arrow reaches its target very quickly. He is like a person whose food is ready and only needs to add a specified amount of salt to it in order for it to be ready for eating. .For this reason good and commendable deeds help man attain his desires

Of course, the desires of human beings are different. The people who have attained the highest levels of devotional service to Allah have sublime requests: their requests include the desire to gain proximity to Allah, to be free of want of other human beings, attain the prosperity of this world and the bliss of the hereafter and also to have the perpetuity of the blessings which Allah has granted to them. They realize that only Allah grants them their needs and not anyone else. On the other hand, people who are

at the lower levels of servitude and awareness of Allah are preoccupied with thinking

about their stomachs, clothes, houses and other needs and their requests are connected to themselves alone and of course Allah grants them their needs.

In reality, the Noble Prophet's (S) words are an encouragement for man to embark upon edification of the soul and discharging of duties in which case a person attains his goals faster and Allah accepts and grants one's requests. It does not make any difference whether his supplication is in connection with himself or other human beings and whether it is in relation to worldly desires or spiritual and heavenly affairs. Therefore, the Noble Prophet (S) encourages people to perform good deeds although the real effects and rewards for our decent deeds become apparent in the hereafter and this world is primarily a place of work and the reward for deeds will be granted to man in the hereafter:

"Today is the day of action and there is no reckoning while tomorrow is the day of reckoning but there will be no opportunity for action."(1)

It has been recorded in another hadith that:

"Whatsoever a man soweth in the world, that shall he also reap in the hereafter."(2)

Here seeds are sown and in the hereafter the produce is collected, but Allah, the Exalted, as a result of His infinite mercy grants some of the effects and produce of the deeds of righteous people right here in this world so as to encourage them to perform more

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۱- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۴۰, sermon [khutbah] ۴۲, trans. Shahidi.

۲- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۰, p. ۲۲۵.

good deeds and to embark upon performance of duties. Even if there are people who have attained high levels of perfection and they do not require such encouragement and their certitude [in Allah] does not increase by seeing more of these effects:

"If the curtains were pulled aside, my certainty could not be intensified..."(1)

There are those for whom all the veils have not been removed, and they need encouragement to embark upon devotional service to Allah and to traverse the course of perfection. One means of motivation is that Allah grants rewards and :blessings for good deeds right in this world and grants prayers

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَى آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِنَ السَّمَاء وَالأَرْضِ ...

And if the people of the towns had been faithful and pious, We would have opened to" (them blessings from the heaven and the earth."(٢

The Existential Blessings of the Righteous and Upright

More significant than what has been said so far, in the following sentences the Noble Prophet (S) mentions the rewards for good and virtuous deeds—rewards which are beyond imagination such that man does not have any expectation that his good deeds :could have such befitting benefits

O Abu Dharr! Because of the righteousness of an individual, Allah rectifies and" improves the state of his children, his grandchildren and his great grandchildren and ".protects those dwelling in his house and in his neighborhood for as long as he is alive

Allah protects from dangers people who are His devoted servants in this world and, as a result of their blessed existence, He protects their

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١- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۴۰, p ۱۵۳.
٢- Surat al-A'raf ٧:٩۶.

children generation after generation, and even the people living in the neighborhood and cities of righteous and upright people are protected from calamities, too. In the same manner, the existential rays of their spiritual blessings and divine graces .encompass their companions and other people living in their vicinity

The existential rays of believers are not the same; some people are only in contact

with their wife and children, others are in touch with their neighbors and workmates too and, beyond that, some people are in contact with the people of one city and even .the people of their country

We all know that the late Imam Khomeini (may Allah be pleased with him) had a bond not only with the people of Iran but with all the Muslims of the world and more than that, with all the oppressed people of the earth. His existential rays had gone beyond one city and one country and had encompassed the whole world. Allah the Exalted, by .means of that able and chosen man included millions of people in His grace

Indeed, not only does Allah, the Exalted, protect a righteous and virtuous person, grant him graces, consent to his supplication and repel calamities from him, but the blessings and graces that are granted to him also include other human beings, such as his family, neighbors and countrymen and calamities too are repelled from these .people in gratitude for his invaluable existence

This precious role and the commendable effects of being a righteous servant

p: ۴۲

of Allah make one aware of the importance of the precious alchemy of setting foot on the course of Allah and following His orders, for its effects even go beyond the realm of man's existence and include other people. Is it not possible that instead of engaging in deeds for which one has hope of benefit but it is not clear that the desired result will be derived and instead of bearing the many hardships of the world in the hope of bringing to hand favorable results, one could spend the moments of his life performing duties and carrying out the orders of Allah so as to secure both worldly and heavenly desires, and so divine graces include both his being and that of his wife, children, and future generations and even neighbors and the people of one's city and ?country

What acts could be more profitable and advantageous than these? Do all the people who do business and trade attain all their worldly desires? Sometimes they make profit and sometimes losses. Besides, what do they gain once they succeed at

business? The utmost gain they make is that they live comfortably for a short time in .this world

As has been said, sometimes the supplication of one righteous man protects all the people of one city from calamities and causes the downpour of divine grace upon the people. Beyond the shadow of a doubt in gratitude for the existence of the saints [awliya'] of Allah and righteous people, a great deal

p: ۴۳

of calamities are repelled from us and as a result of their supplications many graces .are granted to us and all too often we do not perceive those graces

Many times our fathers performed good deeds as a result of which Allah still grants us blessings up to now. Often our teachers and great mentors pray for us, or our neighbors and the believers pray for us in the midst of the night and, as a result of their supplications, Allah grants us graces and repels calamities from us. We do not know where these blessings come from and by means of which people these .calamities are warded off

Do we know what blessings derive from the supplications made in the midst of the night by a righteous human being to the divine presence of Allah? It has been stated in the Qur'an and also recorded in hadiths that Allah grants blessings to other people and wards off calamities from them as a result of the presence of virtuous human .beings

In regard to a hadith which Yunus ibn Zabyan narrates from Imam al-Sadiq, ('a) which :will be discussed later, we can cite evidence in the Qur'an

... وَلَوْ لاَ دَفْعُ اللّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الأَرْضُ وَلَكِنَّ اللّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

Were it not for Allah's repelling the people by means of one another, the earth would" surely have been corrupted, but Allah is gracious to the world's creatures."(۱)

In the hadith stated by Imam al-Sadiq ('a) which is related about

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۵۱ -۱

:the above-mentioned verse, it has been recorded as follows

Allah, the Exalted, wards off calamities from that Shi'ah who does not perform the" ritual prayers in gratitude for our Shi'ahs who do perform the ritual prayers, and if all of them do not pray, they will all be destroyed. Allah, the Exalted, wards off adversities from that Shi'ah who does not fast in gratitude for the Shi'ah who fasts and if all of them unanimously agreed not to fast, they would be ruined. Allah, the Exalted, wards off afflictions from the Shi'ahs in gratitude for that Shi'ah who pays the charity tax and .all of them will be destroyed if they concur not to pay the charity tax

Allah, the Exalted, wards off ordeals from that Shi'ah who does not go on the hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) in gratitude for that Shi'ah who goes on the hajj and if all of them agreed not to go on the pilgrimage, they would be ruined. This is the purport of the word of Allah in which He states, 'Were it not for Allah's repelling the people by means of one another, the earth would surely have been corrupted, but Allah is gracious to the world's creatures.' I swear by Allah that this verse was not revealed (save regarding you and no one was intended except you (the Shi'ahs)."(۱

In regard to the role of the righteous in the society, the blessings which are granted to people in gratitude for the virtuous, and the afflictions

.Tafsir 'Ayyashi, vol. ۱, p. ۱۳۵ -۱

which Allah wards off from other human beings on account of them, it must be borne in mind that the best of people and the Prophets ('a), is the Last Prophet Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah (S), who is the possessor of the first and the last knowledge and in whom all the exalted human attributes and all the eminent spiritual perfections are assembled, and the Pure and Infallible Imams ('a) are likewise; additionally, he is

infallible and far from any kind of error and sin, and is the fountainhead and spring of all the divine graces; just as the Divine Essence has stated:

"... I swear upon my glory and honor that if it were not for you, I would not have created the universe."(1)

In addition to the Noble Prophet (S), the divine presence of the Pure and Infallible Imams ('a) has been the reason Allah has preserved the cosmos and grants His blessings and graces to His creatures all the time and wards off a great deal of calamities due to the presence of the Divine Proof, Imam al-Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance). The world would be annihilated if it were devoid of the Divine Proof even for a single moment, as Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"We are the leaders of the Muslims and the proofs of Allah upon the dwellers of the universe... and the earth would crumble and become obliterated if it were void of our presence." After that the Imam ('a) stated, "The world has never been

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1- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۵, p. ۲۷, hadith ۴۸.

void of the proof of Allah since Adam was created and the divine proof was either apparent and known or was absent and unknown by the others and until the Day of Resurrection the world will not remain devoid of the proof of Allah and if it were not like this Allah would not be worshipped (that is to say no man would remain alive so as to worship Allah)." The narrator of the hadith asked, "How can people derive benefit from the hidden proof of Allah?" The Imam stated, "In the same way that they derive benefit from the sun hidden behind the clouds."(1)

Lesson ۲۷: The Status of a Sincere Servant in the Sight of Allah

point

The theme of this part of the Noble Prophet's (S) counsels is that Allah, the Exalted, takes pride in and praises three types of His servants above the angels. The meaning

of Allah's pride and how He venerates His servants above the angels is not exactly clear to us. What can be gathered from this section of the hadith is that the rank of three groups of Allah's servants is higher than the angels and Allah venerates these .groups on account of their superior and high status

Basis of Man's Superiority and Pre–eminence

There is no doubt that among all his creatures, Allah, the Exalted, has made man enjoy certain distinctions and characteristics which are not to be found in other creatures. Among material creatures, He has made man enjoy the blessings of the intellect, reason and awareness, to the extent that he has been granted charismatic and miraculous powers

p: ۴۷

.Ibid., vol. ۲۳, p. ۵ -۱

:to subdue the dry lands and seas

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِى آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِى الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُم مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلاً

Certainly We have honored the Children of Adam, and carried them over the land and" sea, and provided them with all the good things, and given them advantage over (many of those We have created with a complete preference."(۱

Furthermore, Allah created man having free will and self-determination such that he chooses the path of his prosperity or affliction of his own volition. Man enjoys the benefits of a divine natural disposition by means of which he is inclined towards all good values, merits and virtues and He has also shown him the way towards .prosperity

However, neither does that existential dignity bring about man's superiority over the angels nor his volition, because it is possible that instead of choosing the course of merit and prosperity, man may select the way of disobedience and wretchedness and deviate from the right course, fall into misguidance and become the lowest of

:creatures

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللّهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَهُمْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ

Indeed the worst of beasts in Allah's sight are those who are faithless, so they will" (not believe."(٢

That which causes the status of man to rise higher than that of the angels and brings about his superiority is carrying out the orders of Allah and making effort to traverse the course of perfection by traveling the path of spirituality and eventually attaining perfection. That is, on the basis of

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.Surat al-Isra' ١٧:٧٠ -١

.Surat al-Anfal ٨:۵۵ -٢

his divine inclination, the human being must pursue the path of prosperity and trample .his carnal desires underfoot and moderate his materialistic instincts

When man, who has animalistic and materialistic inner faculties which incessantly pull him towards attention to material and animalistic gratifications, controls his animal faculties, selects what is right and acts on the basis of his divine predisposition when confronted with the choice between right and wrong, he becomes adored by the angels and his rank becomes higher than their status. It is for this reason that in this :section of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Your Lord boasts on account of three individuals over the angels; the" first person that Allah praises over the angels is a man who recites the adhan(١) and the iqamah(٢) in the midst of the desert and performs his ritual prayers. Allah tells his angels, 'Look at my servant maintaining the prayers regardless of the fact that no human being sees him.' Then, seventy thousand angels descend and act in ".accordance with him and seek forgiveness for him until the following day

This is a man who recites the adhan and iqamah in a dry desert devoid of herbage and

far from the sight of people and thereafter performs the prayers and does not consider that, because no one sees, it suffices to recite the obligatory prayers and there is no need to recite the adhan and iqamah for the reason that no one is there to listen. Due

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۱- The call to prayer.
۲- The second call to prayer made just before beginning the prayer.

to obedience and his station of servitude, he performs his prayers with all its formalities and norms and it is for this reason that Allah venerates him over the angels and seventy thousand angels descend and recite their prayers behind him and seek forgiveness for him.

The second person on account of whom Allah boasts over the angels:

“And [Allah boasts on account of] a person who wakes up from sleep at night to pray and prostrate before Allah and then falls into sleep while in the state of prostration. Allah states, ‘O angels! Look at my servant whose soul is in my presence and whose body is in prostration.’”

In regard to a man who wakes in the middle of the night from a comfortable, warm bed and from sweet sleep to embark upon worship and invocation of his Lord and is so immersed in supplication of his Object of Worship that he does not raise his head from the place of prostration to the extent that he falls asleep while in that state, Allah tells the angels, “Look at my servant who has arisen from his restful bed in the middle of the night and embarked upon my invocation and worship far from the eyes of other people. He lengthens his worship so much that he becomes tired and falls asleep while in a state of prostration. His soul is in my presence while his body is in prostration.” Allah, the Exalted, states that the soul of the man in prostration

is in His presence because man's soul during sleep returns to Allah and this is a point :which has been hinted at in the Qur'an

اللّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِی لَمْ تَمُتْ فِی مَنَامِهَا فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِی قَضَى عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الأُخْرَى إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى...

Allah takes the souls at their death, and those who have not died in their sleep. Then" He retains those for whom He has ordained death and releases the others until a (specified time..."(١

From the viewpoint of the Glorious Qur'an a true believer is a person who wakes up in :the middle of the night and forbids himself from sleeping

تَتَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا...

(Their sides vacate their beds(٢) to supplicate their Lord in fear and hope..."(٣"

Yes, maintaining the night prayers far from the eyes of other human beings and performing long prostrations and bowing down for Allah, the Exalted, causes Allah, .the Exalted, to boast on one's behalf

:The third person that Allah praises over the angels is as follows

And [Allah boasts on account of] a man in the battlefield who is deserted by his" ".companions but remains steadfast in fighting until he is killed

Allah, the Exalted, boasts on account of the fighting champion who stands alone on the battlefield contending with the enemy until the last breath of his life after his companions have fled the battleground in defeat because they lacked the power of resistance. Although he could have taken flight like the rest of his friends and saved his own

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.Surat al-Zumar ٣٩:٤٢ -١

That is, they abandon their beds at night and forgo the pleasure of sleep to worship -٢ their Lord in a state of fear and hope. [Footnote of 'Ali Quli Qara'i's translation of the

[Qur'an
.Surat al-Sajdah ۳۲:۱۶ -۳

life, he preferred to be martyred in the way of Allah, the Exalted. Yes, Allah boasts on account of a man who stands up against a multitude of enemies and resists regardless of the fact that in such circumstances resistance is not incumbent. During the early days of Islam, it was initially incumbent for one Muslim to resist against ten people and later on a concession was offered and it became obligatory for one Muslim to resist two people, but if everyone took flight and no one remained on the battleground, it was no longer binding for that one fighter to remain.

There is not the least doubt that fleeing from the battlefield while it was possible to resist the enemy is a great sin and the Glorious Qur'an explicitly forbids running away from war. This action is hated by Allah and the abode of a deserter from the battlefield is believed to be the infernal fire:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا زَحْفاً فَلاَ تُوَلُّوهُمُ الأَدْبَارَ * وَمَنْ يُوَلِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ دُبُرَهُ إِلاَّ مُتَحَرِّفاً لِقِتَالٍ أَوْ مُتَحَيِّزاً إِلَى فِئَةٍ فَقَدْ بَاء بِغَضَبٍ مِنَ اللّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ

"O you who have faith! When you encounter the faithless [for battle], do not turn your backs [to flee] from them. Whoever turns his back [to flee] from them that day—unless [he is] diverting to fight or retiring towards another troop—shall certainly earn Allah's wrath and his abode is hell; and an evil destination shall it be."(۱)

A great deal of lessons can

.Surat al-Anfal ۸:۱۵-۱۶ -۱

be learnt from this part of the hadith: the purport of Allah's boasting over the angels on account of some of His servants is due to their possessing values which are very invaluable in the viewpoint of Allah and if there were other characteristics which bring about more perfection for mankind and draw man to closer proximity with Allah, He

would have mentioned them. When He wants to make known to the angels the high rank of some of Hs servants and to take pride in them, He in truth makes known the best of their values.

Now, we ought to see what common characteristics and qualities these three types of Allah’s servants possess—the one who maintains his prayers with all its norms and recommendations in the wilderness far from the eyes of other human beings, that man who wakes up from his comfortable bed and embarks upon worship and supplication of Allah, and also the person who stands alone against a multitude of enemies and resists to the last breath of his life so as to be granted this extent of superiority and high rank by Allah.

Without the least doubt characteristics such as spending wealth in the way of Allah, freely giving what is needed for the pleasure of Allah, performing acts of worship, and other good works which the divine revealed law has recommended are all valuable and bring about perfection in man, but we ought to observe what characteristics these three groups of human beings have and

what common elements exist among them that cause them to be so highly emphasized.

The common characteristic and element among these three groups of people is aloneness; the first person worships Allah far from the eyes of other human beings and the second one wakes up from sleep alone in the middle of the night to invoke Allah and the third person stands alone in the battlefield in front of the enemy.

Allah does not take pride in the prayer which a person maintains in the local or Friday mosque but instead takes pride in the prayer of a person who maintains prayer alone in the wilderness and the man who stands up to the enemy alone regardless of the fact that all his companions have taken flight from the battleground. It is likely that an individual might have taken part in many battles and skirmishes and have a great deal of courage and bravery and might have also produced victories and glory, but still

despite all this emphasis is laid on a person who has remained alone and even so .continues to discharge his duty

The Role of Independence and Sincerity of Intention

a) Independence

Two important factors called independence or liberty (being free from the influence of other people) and sincerity have brought about the lofty values for the undertakings .of these three types of individuals in solitude

In explanation of the first factor, that is to say independence, it must be said that by and large people submit to the influence and conduct of other people. One of the characteristics

of man is that once he perceives a group of people proceeding along a certain course and following a particular type of behavior, he as well drifts in that direction and becomes inclined to that habit. It seems as though the movement and tendency of other people is a factor which helps man to choose his course of direction and progression. Once he observes a group of people making strides along the path of .good and wellbeing, he also follows suit

Of course, this is a sign of man's weakness and Allah has put this factor in man's nature so that those who are weak may traverse the right path by following righteous people. Unfortunately, these people also fall under the influence of bad elements and all too often being attached to other human beings becomes a cause for them to proceed on the path of falsehood. As a result of imitating other people they change their colors and in order not to be disgraced or stigmatized, they acquire the same .habits that are prevalent in the society

Allah, the Exalted, in condemnation of these people of weak determination who pander to every whim of their associates without thinking, reflecting and observing the consequences of blindly following the people of vanity and falsehood and those

:who entrust the reins of their free will to others, states

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءنَا أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لاَ يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئاً وَلاَ يَهْتَدُونَ

And when they are“

p: ۵۵

told, 'Follow what Allah has sent down,' They say, 'We rather follow what we found our fathers following.' What, even if their fathers neither applied reason nor were guided?!”(۱)

Of course, in connection with the laws of Allah and divine duties, a person without knowledge is obliged to ask religious scholars whenever he is ignorant about an injunction of Allah or the concept of an injunction. This means that he ought to follow and bind himself to the opinions and religious-judicial decrees of a Muslim jurist .[[mujtahid

However, an individual who becomes acquainted with the laws of Allah by means of following the decrees of a Muslim jurist is not equal with one who independently and personally strives to deduce and infer the laws of Allah from their sources because the knowledge of the Muslim jurist and independent scholar is not the same as the awareness which the imitator acquires by means of following the decrees of the .jurist. Without the least doubt independent knowledge is superior

Likewise, in connection with concepts, especially social concepts, the majority of people do not have sufficient awareness and they are impelled to follow individuals who have knowledge of those subjects. This following and submission is not blameworthy and reproachable if it does not go off the right path, but the person who is learned and, by means of the lamp which he carries, guides and leads other human .beings occupies a superior status and position

Beyond the stage of independent knowledge, and more important, is the

p: ۵۶

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۷۰ -۱

stage of decision making and action. Sometimes, man knows a concept either by means of independent reason or by following the opinion of a religious jurist [mujtahid], but there is no certainty that he will act according to what he knows. Indeed, when one is in a group, especially if that group is a large crowd, he takes .action; but he is lazy when alone

Every person has a great deal of examples for this instance in his own personal life; for example, a religious student who lives in a seminary where the Supplication of Kumayl [Du'a' al-Kumayl] is recited on Thursday nights is encouraged to attend the supplication recitals when he sees other seminarians attending the sessions in great numbers, but it is very hard for him to recite the Supplication of Kumayl on a Thursday .night alone when everyone else in the seminary has gone out

In the same way in regard to performing other good works, man is encouraged to do praiseworthy deeds when he sees other people doing the same but, once alone, he raises pretexts for himself and there is no inclination as such in his inner being to impel him to make a decision. In any case, he finds every possible excuse to put off .doing that job

Or, once he sees that lights are on late at night in the rooms of other students and everyone is busy studying, the eagerness to study arises in him and he too studies for hours on end but

when it is time for holidays and there is no one in school except himself, there is no longer that inner pull within and he does not have the desire at all, either. That which has been mentioned were only examples and there are a great number of other .examples to be found in our social and political conduct

The factor for this sluggishness and dependence on others is weakness of resolution and faith. Does a deed acquire value when done by others? Does it lose its value when

not done by others? If the Supplication of Kumayl has value, we ought to strive to .recite it in privacy and solitude as well, not only when a public session is organized

It is a sign of weakness in man to become motivated to only recite the Supplication of Kumayl when he sees other people doing so or only to go to the mosque for Friday prayers when he sees others doing the same. This is not a thing to take pride in. The cause of pride for a person is worship in private when no one sees what we distinguish as a duty—not expecting other human beings to accompany us as we .worship

When I know that Allah wants me to perform a specific deed, I must endeavor to discharge that duty and I must not be concerned about whether others go along with me or not because the lack of support from other people does not reduce the value of that

deed in the least. It is in this very case that man enjoys the benefits of a strong will .and accepts his duties with strong and superior faith

Therefore, he independently makes the decision to perform works whether he is accompanied by other people or not. Without the least doubt, independence in regard to decision making is very valuable; once it is time to make a decision, an individual must not wait to see what way others choose so that he too may take the same course. He who has a strong will and faith fulfills his duty once he distinguishes it as .pleasing to Allah and does not wait for others to give their consent

Jabir ibn Yazid Ju'fi is one of the trusted companions who kept the secrets of the Imams ('a) and has narrated many hadiths from Imam al-Baqir ('a). A lot of the hadiths which the Imam ('a) stated to Jabir were secrets and Jabir was not allowed to divulge those hadiths. He was despondent because he could not present those pure doctrines to those thirsty and desirous for knowledge; it was for this reason that [one day] he went to see Imam al-Baqir ('a) and said, "As a result of the secrets which you have narrated to me and have ordered that I must not divulge to a single human

being, a heavy load has been placed on my shoulders so much so that sometimes I feel intense pressure in my chest and it seems as

if I will go mad!" The Imam ('a) told him, "Yes Jabir, if such a state arises in you, go to the mountainside or to the deserts and dig a ditch and put your head in it and say, 'Muhammad ibn 'Ali ('a) narrated this hadith to me…'"(۱)

After that Jabir used to immerse his head in a well and recite the hadiths which Imam al-Baqir ('a) had narrated to him in order to lighten himself. One of the hadiths which Jabir narrates from Imam al-Baqir ('a) is the following:

"You will not be one of our friends unless you become such that if the people of your city unanimously oppose you and say, 'You are a bad person', you do not become offended and angry, and if all of them say, 'You are a very good man', you will not become happy, rather you must evaluate yourself according [to the standards of] the Book of Allah and if you perceive yourself moving along the path of that Book and you renounce what that Book has recommended that you abstain from, and incline towards what it has advised, and fear what it has warned you against, persevere and be glad because what people say will not harm you."(۲)

The Imam ('a) invites Jabir towards faith and reliance on Allah—that he must have so much trust in Allah that people won't have any effect on him whether they curse or bless him and he must evaluate his conduct and speech according to the standards

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲, p. ۶۹.

۲- Ibid., vol. ۷۸, p. ۱۶۲, hadith ۱.

of the Book of Allah. He ought to be pleased if he sees that his deeds are in conformity with the Book of Allah and thank Allah for this grace and he ought to be upset when he conceives his behavior as not conforming to the Book of Allah because in that case

Allah would not be pleased with him. Therefore, the criteria for contentment and displeasure are the injunctions of Allah not the pleasure and displeasure of human .beings

In decision making, if man has enough academic ability to distinguish his duties, he must be independent and not follow other people. With the help of the intellect which Allah has granted him, he must take time to think and identify his duties while paying heed to the Qur'an and the hadiths and not be concerned about what other people say. Thereafter, when the turn for action comes, he ought to act according to what he .has ascertained and not wait for other people to act accordingly

Even if he remains alone in the battlefield against the enemy and even in the case that resistance is no longer incumbent upon him, he still continues to fight all alone although he knows that he will be martyred because resistance against the enemy is more pleasing to Allah. Without the least doubt, such bravery and valor is invaluable, and it brings about Allah's praise when an individual stands alone guarding his aims without losing his way and continues to resist regardless of being

:left alone. In this regard, Imam 'Ali ('a) states

I swear upon Allah that if all the Arabs unite to fight me, I will not flee from them and" I will make haste to advance my attack on them once I find the opportunity to do (so."(۱

Therefore, the first factor [for encouraging deeds in solitude] is that Allah loves a believer who is independent in distinguishing his duties and also in carrying out his deeds and who does not wait for others nor endeavor to have the same habits as the crowd. Of course, it should not to be mistakenly imagined on account of what has been said that a human being ought to always be alone and move against other .people all the time and always do the opposite of what everyone is doing

This is an unacceptable and reproachable habit that is very foolish. That which is

being asserted is that man ought to be independent in decision making, distinguishing duties and acting upon them and not wait for the encouragement, accompaniment and confirmation of other people. However, it is good and pleasing if once he has made a decision, other people accompany him, too.

Nevertheless, a person must not be such that once he has determined something to be his duty and later on finds out that he has made a mistake, persists right up to the end; this is an unbecoming habit and an obstinate mental condition. Man has to always re-examine his morals, conducts and thoughts and

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۱- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۹۷۱, chapter [kitab] ۴۵, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

admit his errors with all his courage once he perceives that he has made mistakes and not stubbornly persist in his blunders nor insist on his erroneous remarks. A believer acts on what is right once guided to it.

b) Sincerity of Intention

The second factor which causes Allah's pride on account of the three groups of His slaves is sincerity of intention. A person who recites his prayers alone in the desert is not tainted by ostentation and sanctimony. There is no one watching so as to observe him and relate what he is doing to other people. With all certainty, the sincerity of such an individual is more than that of a person who discharges his duties in the presence of others.

If one recites his prayers with all its formalities in the presence of a number of people, there is the possibility of Satan tempting him because the devil is extremely deceitful and no matter how much a person has engaged in self-purification, there is still the possibility of being defeated by the devil and hypocrisy may appear in his heart and he might become pleased that other people are witnessing his deeds or hearing his voice.

However, when he is alone in the desert and recites adhan and iqamah and then

recites the prayers, it is not possible for him to be ostentatious. Also, a person who wakes up in the middle of the night in the absence of any witnesses and embarks upon worshiping Allah and prostrates so long that he

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falls asleep is not likely to be sanctimonious because there is no one to observe what .he is doing

A person who remains alone on the battlefield and fights single-handedly is not likely to be hypocritical since there are no companions to cheer him saying how much courage he has and to narrate his gallantry to other people after he has attained .martyrdom—the enemy will obviously not recount his bravery

Therefore, the other common characteristic existing among those three individuals which is the cause of Allah's pride is the utmost sincerity of intention that exists in .their deeds which has purified them from ostentation and sanctimony

As has been observed, it is likely that the type of the deeds of these three groups of people is similar to the type of works of other people; therefore, that which has granted superiority and distinction to their actions and has made their deeds so invaluable that Allah praises man over the angels on account of them is sincerity of .intention

Purity of intention is a factor for performing deeds only for Allah. It is for this reason that we see that it has been stated in the Qur'an and the hadiths that sincerity and purity of intention is the cause of the superiority of deeds and their being accepted by :Allah

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْکَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ * أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ...

Indeed We have sent down the Book to you with the truth; so worship Allah, putting" pure faith in

p: ۶۴

(Him. Now, surely, sincere obedience is due to Allah (alone)..."(1)

:It has been recorded in a hadith that

Springs of wisdom flow from the heart onto the tongue of a person who practices" (sincerity exclusively for Allah."(2)

:In regard to the blessed verse

الَّذِی خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَیاهَ لِیبْلُوَکُمْ أَیُّکُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِیزُ الْغَفُورُ

He, who created death and life that He may test you [to see] which of you is best in" (conduct. And He is the Mighty, the Forgiving."(3)

:Imam al-Sadiq stated

It is not numerousness of deeds that is desired by Allah, but correctness; and" ".correctness of works means fear of Allah and having a sincere intention

:Then, the Imam ('a) said

Persistence in sincerity is harder than performing the deeds themselves and sincerity" in one's deeds means that one should not want any person to praise him for his works (save Allah, the Exalted, so the intention is greater than the deed."(4)

With regard to what has been said, it is possible for us to have done virtuous deeds deserving a great deal of reward, such as participating in congregational prayers—according to narrations the rewards of which cannot be counted by the angels—but it is not clear whether the sincerity of intention in such prayers is the same as that of the .prayers of a person that recites in the desert in seclusion

Certainly, the devil tempts man and does not allow him to perform his deeds with complete sincerity. The evidence for this is that it is more difficult for people to take action

.Surat al-Zumar ۳۹:۲-۳ -۱
.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۶۷, p. ۲۴۲ -۲
.Surat al-Mulk ۶۷:۲ -۳
.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۲۶ -۴

in worship once they are on their own, let alone fulfill all the formalities; this is because willpower and motivation are not very strong. However, if other people are present and there is external motivating force, people engage in worship much more .easily

Lesson ۲۸: The Greatness of Worship and Servitude and its Existential Effects

point

In this section of the hadith, the greatness and superiority of worship and devotion to Allah, the Exalted, has been mentioned and also the fact that man's deeds—whether righteous or unrighteous—do not remain hidden from the eyes of witnesses and vigilantes; to the extent that the earth, on which we worship or perform unbecoming .acts will even give witness either in our favor or against us on the Judgment Day

It is not possible that our deeds and conduct could be without effects and consequences, but in addition to worldly repercussions the fruits of our deeds will become manifest in the hereafter also. In the hereafter, the ground on which we perform worship shall bear positive witness in regard to our worship, or will bear .witness against us and even curse us if we do unbecoming deeds upon it

The Witnessing of the Earth in regard to Man's Deeds

O Abu Dharr! There is no man who places his forehead on a part of the earth save" that it bears witness on the Day of Resurrection in regard to that, and there is no ".house in which people meet but that it blesses or curses them

Some great people would recite their prayers in different parts of the mosque instead of in one place, or when they entered

a house they would initially recite two rak'ats (cycles) of prayer. The reason they did this was to have more witnesses in their favor on the Day of Resurrection. This in .itself is cleverness, which is beneficial and praiseworthy for a believer

With regard to the superiority and value which has been mentioned in this and other hadiths for prayer, persistence in reciting prayer in different places is an acknowledgement of submission and confidence in the sayings of the Noble Prophet .((S) and the Pure Imams ('a

As can be observed, this section and the other parts of this same hadith are expressive of this fact that the earth, the trees and other inanimate creatures which we conjecture as lacking perception and awareness do have conception and cognizance and comprehend our deeds and bless us for our good deeds and curse us for our bad actions; in addition, they will bear witness either in our favor or against us .on the Day of Resurrection

Characteristics of the Praise of the Earth and Inanimate Objects

About this section of the hadith, where perception and awareness is characterized for the earth as well as inanimate objects, and also Qur'anic verses and other hadiths which have similar subject matter, great scholars have presented three points of :view

The first point of view: A number of scholars believe that these expressions are metaphorical and the intention is not their literal meaning and they mention allegorical interpretations for every instance correspondent with it. Perhaps the majority of exegetes have chosen this method in their interpretations of this type of

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.verse and hadith

The second point of view: The gnostics and mystical philosophers, like Sadr al-Muta'allihin(۱) and their students believe that these existents truly have perception and awareness and glorify Allah and have fear of Allah, but we are unable to

.comprehend this reality

These are the real meanings which they deduce from the Qur’anic verses and hadiths :and assert that the trees, earth, stones and... have awareness and glorify Allah

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِن شَيْءٍ إِلاَّ يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدَهِ وَلَكِنْ لاَ تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ ...

The seven heavens glorify Him, and the earth [too], and whoever is in them. There is“ not a thing but celebrates His praise, but you do not understand their (glorification...”(۲

In the exegesis of the aforementioned verse, ‘Allamah Tabataba’i says, “This verse proves the glorification of material particles of the cosmos—that they glorify Allah and that they exempt Him from having any partners. Glorification means establishing the .transcendence of Allah through speech

Speech is essentially the unveiling of one’s inner intentions through signs and indicators. Because man has not found an existential way to express his intent, he is compelled to make use of words, which are sounds that have been established to signify various meanings and thus make intentions known. From then onwards, this method of explaining and understanding has become standard. In addition, man .makes use of hand and head signals and sometimes writes or posts signs

In short, that which unveils intentions is speech. The result of one’s endeavors to convey their intentions

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.Mulla Sadra -۱

.Surat al-Isra’ ۱۷:۴۴ -۲

is that person’s speech, even though that inner intention is not in the form of sounds and words. The proof of this point is that terms such as word, speech, command and revelation have been attributed to Allah in the Qur’an and without any doubt the way Allah conveys meaning is in no way similar to words and sayings uttered by human

.beings

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, in the heavens and the earth and that which exists within them, something exists that openly declares the Oneness and Unity of Allah and exonerates Him from all defects and imperfections. This is that all existents are in absolute need and want. This need is proof of the existence of the Being whom everything and everyone is in need and there is no thing independent and needless of Him. Therefore, all existents proclaim the presence of a Self-sufficient Creator by .means of their existential need and natural imperfections

:In continuation, 'Allamah Tabataba'i states

The word of Allah, the Exalted, is indicative of this fact that by creating existents, knowledge and awareness too have been spread in them and every one of them derives benefit from knowledge to the extent that they derive benefit from existence and being. This is not to say that they all have knowledge to the same extent and also .not that the knowledge and awareness of all creatures is of one kind

It is not true that the knowledge of all of the creatures is like the knowledge of man

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and/or that man is informed of the knowledge and awareness of every one of the creatures. For this reason, every created existent is in some way aware of itself and manifests its need and imperfection by means of its being and existence, which has become encompassed in the needlessness of Allah and that He has perfection and there is no lord save Him. Therefore, every created existent glorifies its Lord and (exempts Him from every partner and imperfection.(۱

The third point of view: All existents have a spiritual form in addition to their material forms which they possess in this world and in reality perception and awareness are a part of that spiritual and inner form and that same spiritual form becomes manifest .on the Day of Resurrection and gives witness

We do not comprehend that spiritual form in this world, that is why we do not

conceive the glorification of things and do not perceive the effects of awareness and knowledge in them; but that [spiritual] form is existent and becomes manifest in the hereafter and the realities which it comprehends will appear and give witness.

According to the clear explanation of the Qur'an, on the Day of Resurrection even the skin of man bears witness against him, and the tongue, hands and legs all give witness against him. If these limbs did not have any perception, their evidence would be meaningless. In regard to the evidence of the limbs of the body, the Gracious Qur'an states:

وَقَالُوا لِجُلُودِهِمْ لِمَ شَهِدْتُمْ عَلَيْنَا

p: ٧٠

١- Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ١٣, pp. ١١٤-١١٦.

قَالُوا أَنْطَقَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِى أَنْطَقَ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ ...

"They will say to their skins, 'Why did you bear witness against us?' They will say, 'We were given speech by Allah, who gave speech to all things'." (١)

If the skin of man does not have perception by which it conceives at the time of committing sins, how can it to give evidence on the Day of Resurrection in regard to sin which it was incapable of perceiving at the time it was committed? Evidence is meaningful once the witness has conceived and experienced the scene of sin; otherwise, testimony is useless.

If it is said that Allah, the Exalted, will compel the limbs and parts of the body to give evidence on the Day of Resurrection without their having perceived sin, it ought to be answered that in that case there is no evidence applicable and ascription of the term evidence on such an instance is purposeless. For this reason, the bearing of witness by the limbs of the body takes place after perception and experience and a kind of knowledge of the deed and in other than this case, giving evidence does not take place.

Therefore, according to the second and third points of view, there is no doubt in regard to the primary principle of the existence of perception, experience and a kind of knowledge and awareness in the order of creation.

However, differences of opinion exist in regard to the quality: is this knowledge accompanied by the transcendental soul of

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۱- Surat Fussilat ۴۱:۲۱.

things? Or, do they themselves truly have perception and awareness? Of course, the proponents of the first point of view assert that when the limbs and members of a human being manifest on the Day of Resurrection, the effects of man's conduct that abide in the limbs are the same as their testimony.

The Intelligence and Consciousness of Creatures and How they are Influenced

Perhaps among the above three points of view, the third perspective is the best. In any case, it can be gathered from the hadiths and the Qur'anic verses that material things and creatures have a kind of perception and awareness. Not only is their existential awareness constant, but they are affected by events which take place around them and these events that affect them consequently bring about new conceptions in them: when worship is performed in a place, it has a good effect, and the place becomes delighted and expresses pride.

In contrast, if sin is committed in a place, it leaves a bad effect on it and the earth becomes upset and curses the sinner. Of course, we are not able to comprehend these kinds of notions and the subject matter of these verses and hadiths has not become precisely clear to us, but we have to admit that there are unknown truths in the cosmos that are outside the realm of conception and understanding and our knowledge of them is meager. As the Qur'an states:

... وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً

(And you have not been given of knowledge except a little."(١)..."

There are a great number of

١- Surat al-Isra' ١٧:٨٥.

truths in the universe of which we have no knowledge. We have come to know some of these truths by means of revelation or because the great Prophets ('a) and the Pure Imams ('a) have explained them to us and we have confidence in their sayings, so we must be thankful to them that they have clarified these realities for us because, if they had not, our intellects would not have attained them and it would not have been possible for us to conceive such truths with our imperfect intellects:

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولاً مِنكُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمْ مَا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ

"As We sent to you an apostle from among yourselves, who recites to you Our signs, and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you what you did not know."(١)

With regard to what has been mentioned, two points have become clear: the first point being that even if one attains a huge amount of knowledge and awareness and knows all the available scholarship of mankind, still what he knows is less than that which is unknown and his knowledge is still a drop in the bucket compared to that which exists in the universe; for this reason, one ought not to be proud and boastful. In addition, it is not even possible for an individual to acquire all the knowledge of mankind.

Every individual attains only a part of the existing knowledge—a drop from the boundless ocean of knowledge is allotted

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١- Surat al-Baqarah ٢:١٥١.

to him. The second point is that we ought not to imagine that we live in a world where no one sees us when we do something in a secluded place: even if the earth does not conceive and understand, the angels who witness our deeds do perceive and write our deeds and also there are those who do have complete predominance over this universe and nothing remains hidden from their eyes.

The Expansive Domain of the Light of the Pure Imams ('a)

On the basis of our belief as Shi'ah, the light of the Immaculate Imams ('a) is present everywhere, although we do not all comprehend their light as is befitting. The holy presence of the 'the Final Successor', Imam al-Mahdi, may Allah hasten his reappearance, is present everywhere, especially in the gatherings of the Shi'ahs, so much so that he replies to the greetings of an individual who greets him, but our ears are incapable of hearing what he says. If an individual shouts out for his help, he responds to that person.

If a lost one in the wilderness calls upon him, he hastens to help that individual and guides him, and he cures the sick who have lost hope in getting well. It is clear that he is present and he listens because, if he were not present and did not listen, how would he hasten to help and save a person who calls for his help once caught up at the bottom of the sea or lost in the wilderness?

The late 'Allamah Majlisi narrates from his father

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that one of the righteous people of his age who had great piety and knowledge and went to hajj often, was well known for his ability of instantaneous transportation between places [tayy al-ard] came to Isfahan where I met him and asked him how he attained this ability.

He said, "One year I was traveling to the House of Allah with other pilgrims. I arrived at a place eight or nine stops away from honorable Mecca. I fell back and lost the caravan. I lost the way and went astray and became so thirsty that I lost all hope of

ever remaining alive. In that state, I shouted out, ‘O Aba Salih! Show me the way!’ All of a sudden, I saw a man mounted on a camel coming my way. When he got near, I saw that he was a very handsome youth in splendid clothes with the appearance of a great person carrying a vessel of water.

“I greeted him and he responded to my greeting and asked, ‘Are you thirsty?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ He gave me the water and I drank it. After that he said, ‘Would you like me to take you to the caravan to join your companions?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘Get on the back of my camel.’ I got on the back of his camel and he started moving towards Mecca. I started reciting the supplication of ‘Hirz Yamani’ as was my habit and after reciting a few words, that Arab youth taught

p: ۷۵

me to recite it correctly.

“After a little while, he asked me, ‘Do you know this place?’ I looked and saw that I was at a place very close to Mecca. He told me to disembark from the camel. As soon as I disembarked from the camel, he disappeared from my sight. It was then that I realized that that handsome youth was the Imam of the Age, may Allah hasten his reappearance.”(۱)

Therefore, the light of the Imam (‘a) is present everywhere even though we do not perceive it; however, comprehension of this truth is difficult for everyone and such realities if openly narrated without any constraints, may cause some to become afflicted with hyperbolic exaggeration.

Therefore, the lower levels of this issue have been explained and this is that the records of our deeds are presented to the Imam (‘a), or as has been recorded in some hadiths that the records of our deeds are presented to the Noble Prophet (S) and Allah. It has been recorded in a hadith that on one occasion talk about the days of the week was brought up, and when Thursday was mentioned, Imam al-Rida (‘a) stated:

“... The day when the deeds of Allah’s servants are presented to Allah, the Noble

(Prophet (S) and the Imams is Thursday."(۲

It has been recorded in some of the hadiths that the angels take the deeds of man to the Throne in the evening after recording them and present them to Allah. Now, perhaps one might ask: is

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.Tabari Nuri, Kifayat al-Muwahhidin, vol. ۲, p. ۱۸۲ -۱
.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲۳, p. ۳۴۶ -۲

Allah not present in all places that the angels take the records of man's deeds to His Throne? However, it must be understood that the levels of existence have special needs and the presentation of deeds also has a particular discipline which is suitable with the order of Divine Lordship and this is not contradictory with the fact that Allah is .present in every place

Deeds do not Remain Hidden from the Eyes of Witnesses

With regard to what has been mentioned, we have to be aware that we do not live in a world devoid of comprehension and perception: in this world seeing eyes and listening ears exist which bear witness to our actions and words and on the basis of the apparent meanings of some Qur'anic verses and hadiths, even the earth, the trees and the birds have perception and do understand, and of course we are .unaware of this fact

Even if this is not so, at least there are angels who bear witness to our deeds, and higher than this is the holy presence of the Imam of the Age, may Allah hasten his reappearance, who sees our actions and even higher than all is the Divine Essence of :Allah watching over our deeds

... إِنَّ اللّهَ کَانَ عَلَی کُلِّ شَیْءٍ شَهِیدًا

(Indeed Allah is witness to all things."(۱..."

In regard to His awareness about the apparent and hidden deeds of man and also the watching of the angels over the actions of man, Allah, the Exalted, states:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الإِنسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ

۱- Surat al-Nisa' ۴:۳۳.

حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ * إِذْ يَتَلَقَّى الْمُتَلَقِّيَانِ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيدٌ * مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلاَّ لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

"And certainly We have created man and We know to what his soul tempts him, and we are nearer to him than his jugular vein. When the twin recorders record [his deeds] seated on the right hand and on the left, he says no word but that there is a ready observer beside him."(۱)

Elsewhere, in regard to the witnessing of the Noble Prophet (S) on the Day of Resurrection, Allah states:

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَى هَؤُلاءِ شَهِيدًا

"So how shall it be, when we bring from every nation a witness, and We bring you as a witness to them?"(۲)

From these verses which state the witnessing of the Prophet of Allah (S) and the other witnesses, it can be deduced that those witnesses observe the deeds of Allah's servants in this world; otherwise, how would they bear witness if they did not witness the actions of people in this world? Is it possible for a person to bear witness to an event he has not seen?!

If we pay heed to this point that the world which we live in is not dead and is not devoid of awareness and perception, but instead there are beings who see us and observe and witness over our deeds even though we do not see them, we will be alert and think twice in regard to our conduct and modesty

.Surat Qaf ۱۶-۱۸ -۱
.Surat al-Nisa' ۴:۴۱ -۲

.and this will be a hindrance to our doing indecent deeds

If people pay heed to the fact that when they commit sin, the earth and the sky will bear witness to their deeds, that there are books in which lists of man's deeds are recorded and that all actions will become apparent on the Day of Resurrection, they will abstain from perpetrating wrongdoing and not commit sin even in seclusion. As :Imam 'Ali ('a) states

Beware of disobeying Allah in solitude, because the witness (of that) situation is also" (the judge."(۱

If you are in a condition you are not willing to be seen by anyone and someone takes a picture of you, you make every effort to destroy that picture lest in the future that photo is seen by others. Without the least doubt, man does not want a picture which will bring about shame and embarrassment to be taken of him. At the time of taking pictures, a person adorns himself, wears clean clothes and tries to show an attractive .appearance so as to make the picture appear as charming as possible

Again, it is not pleasing for a picture to be taken which will cause one shame. With regard to this similitude, we must understand that natural causes like the earth, the sky, doors and walls are always taking pictures of us and on the Day of Resurrection those pictures will be made apparent for all to see. For this reason, we ought to try not to let them

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۴۲۰, trans. Shahidi -۱

get pictures of us in ugly and shameful circumstances in order not to become embarrassed on the Day of Resurrection when all our deeds and thoughts will :become apparent

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا...

"The day when every soul will find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil, it will wish there were a far distance between it and that (evil)."(١)

Sincerity of Intention in Allah's Servants Brings about Joy and Pride

"O Abu Dharr! There is no morning and evening that passes save that the different points of the earth ask each other, 'O my neighbor! Has a person glorifying Allah passed by?' or 'Has one of His servants placed his forehead on you in prostration for Allah?' Some points of the earth say 'Yes!' and some other points say, 'No.' Every point which says 'Yes', takes pride in itself and becomes happy, and considers itself higher than the other points."

Another issue which has been discussed in this noble hadith is that the point of the earth on which Allah's servant worships and prostrates takes pride in itself. We must consider what the secret of this boasting is. Its secret is that principally that which is valuable in the presence of Allah is attention to Him and all deeds only become worthwhile when they are accompanied by this attention and performed with the intention of winning Allah's favor.

A deed is done for the sake of winning Allah's favor when it

١- Surat Al 'Imran ٣:٣٠.

is performed with attentive remembrance of Allah. The actions of a person that is negligent of Allah cannot be done with the intention of winning His favor. Such a deed is done either with the intention of pleasing one's own heart or for the purpose of gratifying the hearts of human beings and has no value whatsoever in the eyes of Allah.

Therefore, remembrance of Allah and paying heed to Him and anything which connects man to the eternal world has validity, and everything else becomes valuable

in the shadow of heedful remembrance of Allah and is worthless without His .remembrance

For this reason, man's true perfection is attained through attention to Allah and if this is suffused like a soul into all the deeds of man, those deeds acquire value. In other than this case, without paying heed to Allah and without accompanying deeds and worship and divine and sincere intention, they become like a dead body devoid of spirit. Therefore, it is befitting that all our deeds and acts of worship are done for :Allah

قُلْ إِنِّی أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّینَ

Say, 'Indeed I have been commanded to worship Allah with exclusive faith in Him,“ (and I have been commanded to be the first of those who submit [to Him]'."(۱)

The Noble Prophet's (S) emphasis on sincerity, especially sincerity in religion, is because man is Allah's servant, he has been created for devotional servitude to Allah and he ought to pursue perfection, prosperity and spiritual growth in all

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۱- Surat al-Zumar ۳۹:۱۱.

the stages of his life and because this important issue is not attainable except under .the auspices of sincerity and being attentive to Allah

Therefore, purifying acts of worship and sincere devotion to Allah is the most important religious order because it is an important cause for man's gaining proximity to Allah, the Exalted, and attaining desirable perfection. For this reason, Allah, the Exalted, in the Gracious Qur'an has invited the believers to sincerity. It should be understood that man can attain levels where Allah, the Exalted, purifies him for Himself, as praise has been heaped upon the sincere in various instances in the :(Qur'an, for example, in regard to Moses ('a

وَاذْکُرْ فِی الْکِتَابِ مُوسَى إِنَّهُ کَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَکَانَ رَسُولاً نَبِیًّا

And mention in the Book Moses. Indeed he was exclusively dedicated [to Allah], and"
(an apostle and a prophet."(1)

Naturally, the purified [mukhlas] needs a purifier [mukhlis] and beyond the shadow of doubt it is Allah who purifies the pure, to the extent that the devil cannot ensnare them towards perversions:

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ * إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

He said, 'By Your might, I will surely pervert them, except your exclusive servants"
(among them."(2)

In explanation of this Qur'anic verse it ought to be said that the pure and sincere person has a mental, spiritual and divine power which is a hurdle against his falling in the trap of the devils and Satan cannot have a bad effect on them. Of course, the sincere derive benefit of such power by

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۱- ۱۹:۵۱ Surat Maryam.

۲- ۳۸:۸۲-۸۳ Surat Sad.

the grace and mercy of Allah. In regard to Prophet Joseph ('a), Allah, the Exalted, states:

وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْ لا أَنْ رَأَى بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ كَذَلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوءَ وَالْفَحْشَاءَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ

And certainly she made for him; and he would certainly have made for her [too] had" he not beheld the proof of his Lord; so it was, that We might turn away from him all
(evil and indecency. He was indeed one of Our dedicated servants."(1)

It has been emphasized in this verse that Joseph ('a) was not afflicted by sin and wrong-doing, despite the fact that suitable and tempting conditions had been made available to him; circumstances in which any other person might have fallen in the trap of the devil.

Prophet Joseph ('a) was at that time at the peak of maturity and the blossoming of sexual desire and the circumstances in the house of the King of Egypt were filled with welfare and comfort. In addition, the wife of the King of Egypt had created a situation such that, if Joseph had not perceived the proof of Allah, he would have fallen into .temptation

Sincerity of Intention Brings about Superiority in Works

Regarding the previous discussion, that which adds value to the deeds of human beings and is a cause for redemption from the implicit and explicit traps of the devil is purity of intention and attention to Allah, the Exalted; therefore, even the best and greatest of deeds lack any value and worth if they are not done for Allah. In

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.Surat Yusuf ۱۲:۲۴ -۱

the words of the hadiths and Qur'anic verses, the best of deeds is jihad (striving in the :way of Allah), to the extent that Allah states

... فَضَّلَ اللّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً وَكُلاًّ وَعَدَ اللّهُ الْحُسْنَى وَفَضَّلَ اللّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Allah has graced those who wage jihad with their possessions and their persons by a" degree over those who sit back; and to each Allah has promised the best of reward, and Allah has graced those who wage jihad over those who sit back with a great (reward."(۱

Now this very jihad, despite all its superiority and excellence, is devoid of any value if it is carried out without any attention to Allah and without a divine intention. According to some narrations, in one of the wars during the early days of Islam, one man on the battlefield fought with utmost bravery and valiance and finally was killed. The fighting .and bravery of that man aroused the admiration of the other Muslim soldiers

For this reason, they addressed the Noble Prophet (S), "Surely, that man has a very

high position in the eyes of Allah on account of his brave and courageous fighting." The Noble Prophet (S) responded, "He has not been killed in the way of Allah, but in the way of his horse!" (That man's horse had become entrapped in the army of the enemy as a result of fear and dread, and that man fought very hard in order to rescue his horse from

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.Surat al-Nisa' ۴:۹۵ -۱

(.the enemy until he finally was killed

Of course, not every jihad, endeavor in Allah's cause or martyrdom brings about perfection. Only martyrdom which is accompanied by attention to Allah can result in perfection, like our beloved martyrs who made vows [nadhr] to become martyred during the Iran-Iraq war. Some would go to the Mosque of Jamkaran for forty nights on Fridays and/or Thursdays and ask Allah to grant them their wish of martyrdom. This kind of martyrdom is valuable because it is accompanied by remembrance and .attention to Allah

The superiority and value or inferiority of man's deeds and conduct are related to one's intention: a person's deeds are valuable if his intention is pure and his deeds are done for the sake of Allah. The more one's remembrance of Allah and the more his love and knowledge increase, the more the value of his deeds increases. In contrast, if man's deeds are done without knowledge and love of Allah and without attention to .and remembrance of Him, they are like a dead body devoid of vital force and benefit

When the various points of the earth ask from each other, they do not enquire, "Has anyone done the jihad or spent his property in the way of Allah upon you?" On the contrary, they ask, "Has anyone remembered Allah upon you or not?" Therefore, the deeds of man are considered as worship if they are done with attention to Allah. One's jihad, prayers, and spending property in the way of Allah

.are all considered to be worship if they are done with a sincere intention for Allah

Acquisition of knowledge, teaching, academic discussion and even listening to speeches are considered to be worship once done with a pure intention for Allah. However, if sincerity of intention is absent, not only are one's deeds not worship, they are also a means of attracting the attention of other human beings. Hence, the thing that is important and worthy of attention, to the extent that even elements of the .earth have conceived it, is attention to Allah and the Divine Presence

When we turn the pages of the Glorious Qur'an, we do not find any scene in which the invocation and glorification of Allah has not been mentioned. One of the statements of :Allah, the Exalted, is

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا

"O you who have faith! Remember Allah with frequent remembrance."(۱)

In another place, after citing for the wise reasons for creating the sky, the earth and the rotation of the night and day, Allah, the Exalted, thus introduces those who :possess wisdom

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىَ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

"Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth [and say], 'Our Lord, You have not created this in vain!'..."(۲)

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) says that Prophet Moses ('a) thus requested from Allah, the :Exalted

"O Allah! There are times and states in which I feel embarrassed to invoke

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۱- Surat al-Ahzab ۳۳:۴۱.

۲- Surat Al 'Imran ۳:۱۹۱.

You!" (Perhaps he meant the time of easing nature.) Allah responded, "O Moses! My invocation is good and acceptable in all states."(1)

It is for this reason that supplications have been recorded even for times of using the toilet and when easing nature, so that man does not become forgetful of worshiping Allah even in that state because Allah is never pleased that even one moment of our lives is passed in forgetfulness or that we become negligent of worshiping Him and it is for this reason that man's perfection is attained under the auspices of devotion and servitude to Allah.

Therefore, we must strive to be attentive to Allah, the Exalted, at all times, even though that attention may be weak. Invocation and remembrance of Allah is an alchemy which, added to a valueless item, causes the item to acquire the highest value; this alchemy bestows value and purpose to our lives.

Lesson ۲۹: Devotion and Worship, the Greatest Assets for Humanity

point

"O Abu Dharr! Any youth who, for the sake of Allah, abstains from the world and its vanity and spends his youth in obedience to Allah until he reaches old age, Allah grants him the reward and bounty equivalent to the reward and bounty of seventy two of His most sincere and honest servants."

The Parasitic Nature of the World

In this section of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) embarks upon expounding the importance of seeking excellence and the superiority of a person who has traversed the path of perfection, because it can be gathered from the Qur'anic verses and hadiths that the

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۳, p. ۳۴۳.

world, with all its expansiveness and greatness, has been created for the perfection

of humanity. In reality, the main reason for the creation of this world is humanity, and the rest of the creatures are at the service of human beings. Allah, the Exalted, states:

وَهُوَ الَّذِی خَلَق السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ فِی سِتَّهِ أَيَّامٍ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَی الْمَاء لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلاً...

"It is He who created the heavens and the earth in six periods—and His dominion (extends) upon the waters—that He may test you [to see] which of you is best in conduct."(۱)

The purport of the blessed verse is that Allah, the Exalted, created the heavens, the earth and the natural world to prepare the basis for the creation of human beings, and He created human beings to test them. The meaning of this verse is wonderful and understanding it deeply can have positive effects on people's thoughts and conduct.

This reality that Allah, the Exalted, has created the cosmos with all its greatness for the purpose of bringing man into existence so that he can attain perfection by making use of the existential capacities in the world is indicative of the degree of man's value and the profoundness of his responsibilities.

Mentioning the aforesaid is necessary for the reason that human beings, from among the rest of the existing creatures, ought to perceive their existential value and realize that they are not simple creatures like the worm, the frog or others of these types; on the contrary, humans are esteemed and invaluable

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۱- Surat Hud ۱۱:۷.

creatures and magnificent existential capital has been provided in order to bring about and facilitate the conditions of their lives.

The world has been created in its entire splendor so that the basis for the creation of an intelligent, self-willed and determined existent could be provided. Therefore, man's obligation, as an intelligent and thinking existent, is to initially perceive his

existential value. However, conceiving this point is not enough in itself despite all its importance; rather, he ought to comprehend his responsibilities, too, in the created world and realize that he has not been created for vanity, futility, purposelessness .and uselessness

Among all the creatures of the world, man has characteristics which are not found in other existents; that is to say, man has been blessed with the intellect. When we say that man has superiority and prominence over the rest of the creatures this is not only in regard to the intellect; man is higher than the rest of the existents in regard to the .other attributes and qualities as well

Whatever perfection is found in the other creatures, it is found in man in the best sense of the word. This asserted meaning becomes completely clear when man is compared with the rest of the creatures and when his discoveries with regard to food, .clothing, accommodation and marriage are pondered

We see that the adaptations and discoveries which man puts to use in the order and management of his social activities are not found in any other creature. In addition

p: ۸۹

to this, people employ other creatures in order to attain their goals, but the rest of the animals and the vegetables and other than these are not like this; on the contrary, they have simple effects and activities especially reserved for them: from the day that they were created up to now, they have not gone a step further than their own situations and have not had any transformations for themselves. On the other hand, man has taken great strides towards perfection in all the aspects of his life and .continues to take even further steps

In short, the progeny of Adam enjoys the benefit of a certain characteristic and it is because of that very quality, that is to say the intellect, that it has attained distinction over the rest of the creatures and distinguishes right from wrong, good from evil and .beneficial from harmful

The Pre–eminence of the Complete Human Being

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِی آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِی الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلاً

Certainly We have honored the Children of Adam, and carried them over land and" sea, and provided them with all the good things, and given them an advantage over many of those We have created with complete preference."(1)

In interpretation of this verse, 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may Allah be pleased with him, states:

This verse is in the form of obligation of indebtedness for favors; of course, obligation mixed with reproof. Indeed, after Allah, the Exalted, mentions the abundance of His graces and His successive granting of blessings and virtues to man,

p: ٩٠

١- Surat al-Isra' ١٧:٧٠.

including mounts to cross the deserts and the seas in order for him to acquire those graces and necessary subsistence in order to better manage his life, He mentions the point that man has forgotten his Lord, shunned Him, has not asked from Him and has once again returned to his previous ways after being saved from the sea even though he has always been immersed in Allah's graces.

Allah, the Exalted, lists a summary of His graces and favors in this verse so that people may understand that their Lord has provided them numerous favors and realize that it is very unfortunate that they are ungrateful for these favors and other divine graces.(1)

We see that there is much room for human beings to realize the value of the gem or pearl of existence and not sell it in exchange for the vain and valueless merchandise of this world.

Man needs special conditions and facilities in order to attain human perfection and the world with all its transformations and developments is placed at his disposal. We know to some extent that if the constant transformations and order of the natural

world were not existent, man's volitional life would either not take place or it would .take place in an incomplete form

In brief, it is known that the world has an orderly system and its various factors are in need of one another. An example of one of those factors is the attraction that exists among planets in the heavens such that

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.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۱۳, p. ۱۶۵, third ed., Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah Publications -۱

if that determined and precise attraction were to be interfered with and one of those spheres were to leave its orbit, the order of the planets would be thrown into disarray .and a catastrophe would take place

As has been indicated, the universe with all its magnificence is a prerequisite for the creation and perfection of humanity, and the perfection that humans must attain is so valuable that the universe with all its expansiveness and majesty is made to be their stepping stone. Of course, among human beings, there are few individuals who attain ultimate perfections and the rest of the people achieve certain benefits under the auspices of the existence of those few individuals and the merit of their existence is .dependent on the existence of the chosen ones

As a simile, in order to find a few diamonds in a great mine of fifty square kilometers with a great depth, miners must do a lot of exploration and searching. The aim of all this probing is to find a few precious diamonds, even if besides diamonds, coal, which does not have as much value, is dug up too, it does not matter so much. Therefore, besides diamonds, which are the main aim of opening up a mine, other substances too are found, which have secondary value, and in addition worthless stones, which .do not have any value at all and thus are cast aside

The object of creating the cosmos is the pure lights, the most prominent and outstanding of

them being the lights of the Fourteen Infallibles (‘a) and after them the rest of the Prophets (‘a) and the people who join their category on account of the level of their excellence and purification. (There have been approximately one hundred and twenty four thousand Prophets (‘a) and saints [awliya’] of Allah (‘a) and some of the Prophets (‘a) and saints [awliya’] (‘a) are higher in status than the others but we do not know (.their numbers

The highest human ideals have been summed up in the Noble Prophet (S) and his Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and the lowest levels of excellence are found in people who will enter paradise after everyone else. The rest of the human beings whose hearts are devoid of the light of faith are like the worthless stones and are burnt in the :infernal fire of divine wrath

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنْسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لاَ يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لاَ يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لاَ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا...

Certainly We have created for hell many of the jinn and humans: they have hearts“ with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, they (have ears with which they do not hear...”(۱

The dwellers of hell are the wastes of this world and the main aim of creating this cosmos is the Noble Prophet (S), Fatimah al-Zahra’ (‘a) and the Infallible Imams (‘a). The whole world, despite all its expansiveness and magnificence as well as perfection and excellence, is

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۱- Surat al-A‘raf ۷:۱۷۹.

not comparable to the existence of any one of them! On the contrary, one day of their being has more worth than this whole universe. The real owners of this cosmos are people who have attained prosperity in the eyes of Allah and have set up their abodes :in His proximity

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِی جَنَّاتٍ وَنَهَرٍ * فِی مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ مَلِیکٍ مُقْتَدِرٍ

"Indeed the pious will be amid gardens and rivers in the abode of truthfulness with an Omnipotent Sovereign."(1)

Paradise, the Dwelling of the Believers and the Friends of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)

Muslims believe that the people who die in a state of faith and belief go to the garden of eternal bliss, namely paradise; even if they have the lowest levels of faith and on condition that at the time of death that conviction is not transformed into disbelief (they enter paradise after passing through the state of purgatory).

There is no doubt that ideal faith is procured under the auspices of loving and believing in the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt ('a); as the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"Verily a person who dies loving the family of Muhammad (S) in his heart has passed away as a believer possessing complete faith; truly the angel of death gives the glad tidings of paradise to a person who dies loving the family of Muhammad (S)..."(2)

For this reason a Shi'ah who is a lover of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and is humbly submissive and obedient to the orders and wishes of Allah and His saints [awliya'] ('a) does not have any misgivings in regard to

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۱- Surat al-Qamar ۵۴:۵۴-۵۵.

۲- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲۳, p. ۲۳۳.

death because in the viewpoint of a believer death is a bridge for attaining the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted.

Addressing his companions on the day of 'Ashura, Imam al-Husayn ('a) says:

"O people of noble birth! Be patient because death is nothing but a bridge which delivers you from hardships and tribulations to expansive gardens and eternal bliss. Verily who among you does not like to leave the prison and go to the palace?"(1)

In regard to the ardent desire of the God-fearing to meet their Lord, Imam 'Ali ('a) :says

If there were no appointed hour for their (i.e. the God-fearing ones') death, their" souls would not for a single moment remain in their bodies on account of their ardent desire for divine reward and their fear of divine retribution. The Creator is great in their souls; it is for this reason that everyone [and everything else] is small in their (eyes."(۲

"?A person asked Abu Dharr, "Why do we [human beings] have an aversion of death

:Abu Dharr responded

Because you have cultivated and developed your material world but have" devastated your hereafter. Therefore, you are not willing to leave prosperity to go to (your ruin."(۳

Individuals will derive benefit from paradise in relation to their faith and their deeds: some people will enter purgatory after death and thereafter find their way to heaven. However, some people who were sinners, even if faint light of faith shines from their being, will only enter paradise after being requited by divine retribution and all too often they

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۱- Shaykh Saduq, Ma'ani al-Akhbar, p. ۲۸۹.

۲- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۶۱۲, sermon [khutbah] ۱۸۴, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

۳- Fayd Kashani, Muhajjah al-Bayda', vol. ۸, p. ۲۵۸.

will enter paradise after long years of torture and punishment and after being cleansed from their sins and contaminations like gold which is placed in a furnace in order to be purified from impurities to be transformed into pure gold. Without the least doubt, these are not the companions of paradise, but are guests who have been admitted into heaven on account of the intercession of the real masters of paradise

.and as a result of the grace and mercy of Allah, the Exalted

The Companions of Paradise

point

:Allah, the Exalted, thus describes the real masters of paradise in His book

وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُوْلَئِکَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللّهُ عَلَيْهِم مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَئِکَ رَفِيقًا

Whoever obeys Allah and the Apostle—they are with those whom Allah has blessed,“ including the prophets and the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous, and excellent (companions are they!”(۱

In this blessed verse four groups of people have been mentioned as the true dwellers of heaven. The rest of the people will only enter paradise by means of following them and as a result of their intercession and in reality they are the hosts and owners of the house and the others are guests. The owners of paradise, that is to say the prophets (‘a), the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous are people upon whom Allah has completed His favor and He has ordered us to request in our prayers that He guide us :to their way

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ * صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

Guide us“

.Surat al-Nisa’ ۴:۶۹ -۱

(on the straight path; the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favors.”(۱

It is worth mentioning that the purport of ‘martyrs’ in the above verse is those who bear witness to man’s deeds on the Day of Resurrection whose status is much higher than the rest of the martyrs, such that ‘Allamah Tabataba’i states: the meaning of shahadat (in some Qur’anic verses) is to bear witness to the deeds of human beings.

What is meant by this is to endure and see the truth of deeds which people perform in the world, whether that truth is prosperity or wretchedness. Therefore, the witness on the Day of Resurrection bears testimony on the basis of what he has seen. The Day of Resurrection is a day when Allah asks all things to bear witness, even the limbs of the body. The Day of Reckoning is the day when the Noble Prophet (S) will say:

... يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِی اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا

"...O my Lord! Indeed my people have treated this Qur'an as a forsaken thing."(۲)

It is quite apparent that such a noble minded spirit and generous station is not allotted to all people in the Islamic community, because this is special nobility particularly reserved and befitting of the saints [awliya'] of Allah... the lowest level which these witnesses (witnesses of our deeds) possess is that they are under the guardianship of Allah, under the auspices of His grace and followers of the straight path.(۳)

We have concluded that the most superior

۱- Surat al-Fatihah ۱:۶-۷.

۲- Surat al-Furqan ۲۵:۳۰.

۳- Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۱, pp. ۳۲۴-۳۲۵, third ed., Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah Publications.

servants of Allah, those in whose right He has completed His favor and has appointed them the companions of paradise, are the prophets ('a), the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous and the rest of the worshipers of Allah attain paradise on account of following these four groups of people. Of course, the people who find their way into paradise by means of following these four groups of chosen servants of Allah are varied in regard to their levels and are not all in one station, and even those among the four groups of Allah's chosen ones are not all on the same level and some are higher than the others.

(a) The Station of the Prophets ('a) and the Great Prophet of Islam (S)

On the basis of Allah's statement, the Prophets ('a) have been allotted higher :positions than the rest of the people

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَى آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

Indeed Allah chose Adam and Noah, and the progeny of Abraham and the progeny of" ('Imran above all the nations."(١)

:In addition to this, He has made some of the prophets ('a) higher than the others

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ...

(These are the apostles, some of whom We gave an advantage over others..."(٢"

From among the hundred and twenty four thousand prophets who Allah sent for the guidance of mankind, only three hundred thirteen had an apostolic mission. Even then, not all the apostles possessed divine law. Only five of them were given divine law. Those who possessed divine law were Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and the .(Noble Prophet Muhammad (S

١- Surat Al 'Imran ٣:٣٣.
٢- Surat al-Baqarah ٢:٢٥٣.

These legislator prophets ('a) have a higher status than the rest of the apostles ('a) and, according to our belief, the Last Prophet (S) is distinguished above all the :prophets ('a). As he himself stated

O 'Ali! Allah, the Blessed, the Exalted, has made His prophets ('a) higher than the" angels in His proximity and He has made me superior to all the prophets ('a) and messengers ('a) and after me superiority belongs to you and the Imams ('a) after you; (and verily the angels are our servants and they are the servants of our friends."(١

This proves that the main aim of creating humanity is the chosen ones of Allah and in the same way that ordinary people are different in ranks and perfections, there are

differences too among the prophets ('a) and the righteous and the friends of Allah in regard to high human perfections and levels although this is not comprehensible for us and only Allah is aware of everyone's ranks.

The divine prophets ('a) and the saints [awliya'] of Allah ('a) were not contaminated by polytheism and sin even for the time it takes for the blink of an eye. This refers to polytheism in the real sense of being preoccupied by other than Allah; thus, they could never at all have been idol-worshippers. Their object of desire and goal was Allah and they did not have any other goal except Him.

If they had any attention to other than Allah, it was out of duty for the purpose of

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۸, p. ۳۴۵.

obeying His orders that had been requested of them, in order not to be heedless the servants of Allah and in order to attain their principle aims; of course, they would make use of material means in order to attain their aims, but their goal was Allah and nothing more.

We only have a weak conception of the high level of the prophets ('a). We cannot perceive the depth of their superior station and all too often our intellects become bewildered when we try to contemplate their rank. Only they and their Lord are aware of their station and the rest of the people are incapable of knowing their human level and that which they have attained:

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

"So no one knows what has been kept hidden for them of that which will refresh the eyes as a reward for what they used to do."(۱)

b) The Station of the Righteous [Salihin]

One of the high levels of human beings that has been mentioned is the station of the

righteous [salihin]. In regard to their high level and the superiority of their station, Allah quotes Prophet Moses ('a):

رَبِّ هَبْ لِی حُكْمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِی بِالصَّالِحِينَ

"My Lord! Grant me [unerring] judgment, and unite me with the righteous."(٢)

Elsewhere, Allah states:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً وَكُلاًّ جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ

"And We gave him Isaac, and Jacob as well for a grandson, and each of them We made righteous."(٣)

(c) The Station of the Truthful [Siddiqin]

Another lofty human level is the station of the truthful [siddiqin]. The word 'siddiqin' denotes extreme

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١- Surat al-Sajdah ٣٢:١٧.
٢- Surat al-Shu'ara' ٢٦:٨٣.
٣- Surat al-Anbiya' ٢١:٧٢.

truthfulness and sincerity; that is to say, people who are very truthful. What is worthy of mentioning is that truthfulness is not only confined to the tongue; one of the instances of truthfulness is the words which man utters and another is the deeds which he does. A man is truthful once his deeds conform to his words because deeds make the inner belief known and man is truthful in the relating of his inner belief once he makes known what is in his conscience in a complete manner and nothing remains hidden; such a deed is correct and truthful.

True speech too is that word which corresponds with reality and the external world and because talking too is an action, a person that is truthful in his action will inevitably not speak except what he knows to be correct and he is also aware that

words must be well-timed, well-suited and correct. For this reason, such speech is indicative of the truthfulness of the report and is also expressive of the truthfulness of the speaker.

Therefore, a truthful person is one who never lies at all and does not do what he is not certain to be correct, no matter how much it suits his carnal desires. Likewise, he does not say what he is not sure about and does not do what is not compatible with devotional servitude to Allah. Describing himself, Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"Certainly, I belong to the group of people who care not for the reproach of

p: ١٠١

anybody in matters concerning Allah. Their countenance is the countenance of the truthful and their speech is the speech of the virtuous."(١)

The station of the truthful is such a superior station that when Allah, the Exalted, wants to describe the ranks of some of his prophets ('a), He states:

وَاذْكُرْ فِی الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا

"And mention Abraham in the book. Indeed he was a truthful one, a Prophet."(٢)

Or in regard to Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ ('a), He says:

وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ

"And his mother was a truthful one."(٣)

Of course, we do not covet to attain such a lofty station as the stations of the righteous and truthful, but in any case man's ambition does not have to be low. He ought to strive according to his aptitudes and capacities and endeavor to arrive at the highest levels possible. Man ought to try to attain levels which fallible people are capable of attaining.

There were people among the Islamic scholars who attained high human levels and

we have known and seen with our own eyes some of them and many prominent people have reached the peak of perfection which is befitting of exalted people but we are not aware. Without the least doubt, these high ranks are only attainable under .the auspices of high ambition and relentless effort

The Station of Infallibility Especially Reserved for the Chosen Ones of Allah

Allah has not placed any hindrances in humanity's way to perfection and completion; human beings can arrive at high levels like the station of the righteous if they have motivation to do

p: ۱۰۲

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۲۲۴, sermon [khutbah] ۱۹۲, trans. Shahidi -۱

.Surat Maryam ۱۹:۴۱ -۲

.Surat al-Ma'idah ۵:۷۵ -۳

so, although they cannot become one of the Infallibles. The station of the truthful and .the righteous is lower than the station of the Infallibles

Therefore, every human being can arrive at those stations; every person can manage not to commit sin in his life and in truth a person who strives to avoid the contamination of sin and abstain from the desires of the carnal soul and only do that which is pleasing to Allah is practically infallible even though the term 'infallible' cannot :technically be applied to him. To explain this issue, it ought to be said

Ismah" (infallibility) literally means holding and being a hindrance, and in technical" terms it means a habit of the soul, man's second nature so to speak, which prevents a person possessing it from committing sin or even mistakes and errors. Now the question is: is this second nature a hindrance and that is why they call it infallibility or is it that Allah prevents the person having this habit and second nature from committing ?sin, mistakes and error

In essence, both meanings are correct: we are not mistaken whether we say the infallible individual is a person who has a second nature and hindrance which prevents

him from committing sin and error or when we say that an infallible person is a man whom Allah prevents from sin and error because He protects him by means of this same second nature. Therefore, one who is infallible is a person who is immune

.from error and sin or one who is immune from sin

The first kind of infallibility is related to one's works, but the second type of infallibility is broader than just deeds; that is to say, it also includes the levels of perception and distinguishing right from wrong because the infallible person in the second sense of the word is an individual who not only is practically exempted from sin but also does not make errors in perceiving and distinguishing what is right from what is wrong. In other words, he understands and explains correctly as well as practically acting .flawlessly

In regard to the infallibility of the prophets ('a) and the Infallible Imams ('a), 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may Allah be pleased with him, asserts, "The Gracious Qur'an clearly states that Allah has selected and chosen them for Himself and has purified them for :Himself, as the Qur'an states

وَمِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ وَإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَاجْتَبَيْنَاهُمْ وَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

And from among their fathers, their descendants and brethren, and We chose them" (and guided them to the straight path."(۱

Allah has granted them such a high level of knowledge that it prevents them from committing sins and offenses. As a result of having that second nature, perpetrating sin (even minor sins) is inconceivable for them. Though infallibility and justice both prevent the perpetration of sin, their difference is that infallibility, as second nature, makes the perpetuation of sin impossible whereas justice as a second nature does .not make it impossible

Even though infallibility as a second nature

.Surat al-An'am ۶:۸۷ -۱

cannot be violated and its effects are definite and permanent, it does not alter human nature—which is self-determination in voluntary actions—and does not force a person to be infallible. How can it compel while knowledge is the foundation of free will and the strengthening of knowledge results in the strengthening of resolution. For example, if a person that desires health is certain that a particular thing is a deadly poison, his certainty does not force him to abstain from consuming the poison rather it (impels him to abstain from it out of his own volition."(۱

According to what has been said, even people like Abu al-Fadl al-'Abbas ('a), 'Ali Akbar ('a) and a great deal of the progeny of the Imams ('a), even though they did not commit sin in the entire course of their lives, do not have the type of infallibility which is exclusive of the prophets ('a), the Imams ('a) and Fatimah al-Zahra' ('a). Of course, there is no doubt that the rank of such prominent people is higher than that of the rest of the people and they had a kind of infallibility, but it is also certain that they did not .(have the infallibility exclusively guaranteed to the prophets ('a) and the Imams ('a

In conclusion, human beings can have practical infallibility in regard to abstaining from sin and can attain the station of the truthful if they have high objectives and embark upon edification, repression of carnal desires of the soul and strengthen their relationship with

Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۱۱, pp. ۱۷۷-۱۸۹, third ed., Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah - ۱ .Publications

Allah. Therefore, people have to move along the path of spiritual perfection and .inspire themselves to become truthful and righteous

There is not the least doubt that if human beings make effort and attain the

necessary capacities and befitting capabilities, Allah is by no means niggardly in granting high stations. Basically, Allah Himself encourages His worshipers to arrive at lofty levels and Islam has urged the believers to have high ambitions. Allah wants the faithful to have high aspirations in this regard and not to be content with less. A believer ought to set his eyes on the station of the prophets ('a) and endeavor to .imitate them

If we cannot attain the station of the prophets ('a) and their infallibility, we can at least become truthful and righteous because the infallibility that is exclusively for the .prophets ('a) and the Imams ('a) is not a condition for those two stations

As has previously been stated, siddiq (sincere) denotes excessive truthfulness and honesty, that is to say a person who does not entertain lies throughout his or her life. A truthful person does not entertain lies in words, deeds or thoughts and does not .harbor wrong and indecent thoughts

The Importance of Sincere Faith and the Means of Attaining It

:In regard to the value of sincerity and truthfulness, the Noble Prophet (S) states

Sincerity leads to righteousness and righteousness guides to paradise, and man does" (not say the truth save that he is recognized to be sincere in the eyes of Allah."(١

Perhaps we may imagine that attaining sincerity in speech, thoughts and conduct is

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.Fayd Kashani, Muhajjah al-Bayda', vol. ٨, p. ١۴ -١

not a hard undertaking and we may believe that we can manage not to tell lies, not to nurture indecent thoughts in our minds and not to behave badly; however, the truth is that being honest is a very hard thing. We all claim to have faith in Allah and conceive Him to be present and seeing at all times, but do our words and deeds validate our ?claims

Sometimes we do deeds in private that would make us feel ashamed if a small child were present witnessing our actions, and we would never do those things in that case. Now, how can we believe that Allah is present and seeing us and at the same time do ugly deeds? In reality, we perceive Allah to be less than a small child and we are not sincere in our belief. The taint of falsehood is in our belief. At the same time, we believe that if human beings obey Allah in the whole course of their lives, Allah grants them rewards for every second of their lives—rewards which are greater than the universe and everything that is in it, but are we honest in this belief and conviction? ?Does our conduct conform to this belief

If a person has a small bag of gold, does he aimlessly drop it in a well? Does an intelligent man ever do such a thing? Even if he only has one piece of gold, he hides it in a very secret place so as not to

p: ۱۰۷

lose it or so that it may not become stolen. A person never easily loses material wealth and capital because he knows it is not a wise deed. Now, if we believe that the moments of our lives are more precious than jewels like diamonds, are we ready to let them easily slip out of our hands? Even supposing that we do not sin, do we not ?waste our lives pursuing many vain and worthless activities

If we truly believed that a reward higher than this world existed for every moment of our lives, we would not be willing to lose it for anything in the same way that we do not lose material things of the world without something in return. When we lose a hundred tumans,(۱) we become worried out of our wits and even during recitation of our prayers we become preoccupied with thinking about how to find it. (During prayer some people involuntarily begin thinking about their lost items and easily remember (!things they have forgotten

If a person acquires wealth by means of a great deal of effort and endeavor, he is not willing to easily place that wealth at the disposal of others and he well knows its value because he has taken a lot of pains to acquire it, but it is possible for him to spend .hours of his life pointlessly without feeling the least loss

In other words, it is likely that a person is miserly in expending his material wealth, but he

p: ۱۰۸

۱- Iranian currency.

is not at all cautious in spending the moments of his life in spite of the fact that the value of wealth is clearly not equal to the value of a lifetime. Therefore, we are not really truthful to our claims of faith in the hereafter and heavenly reward which may be granted to us for every second of our lives because if we truly had sincere faith, we would not spend our lives pursing vanity or, even worse, squander our lives in sin!

In truth, our lives are mixed with these false claims. If, Allah forbid, this deceitfulness infiltrates our practical ways of life and words too, we can become afflicted by even worse sin. In the Gracious Qur'an, Allah states:

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللّهِ إِلاَّ وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

"And most of them do not believe in Allah without ascribing partners to Him."(۱)

Perhaps in this Qur'anic verse Allah would like to make us understand the point that the faith of most believing people is intertwined with polytheism and thus not pure. If man only has one Object of Worship and is not polytheistic, there will never be room for carnal desires, worship of power and, in short, there will be no room for love of this world in his heart. The presence of all these vain inclinations and worldly affections is a sign that that man has several objects of worship, not one.

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَى بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ

p: ۱۰۹

۱- Surat Yusuf ۱۲:۱۰۶.

مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

Have you seen him who has taken his desire to be his god and whom Allah has led" astray knowingly and set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and put a blindfold on (his sight? So who will guide him after Allah? Will you then not take admonition?"(١

Yes, people who harbor carnal desires have set their sensual passions as their object of worship and are in fact polytheists. In truth, faith which is intermixed with carnal desire is not pure and is contaminated with polytheism. Of course, the faiths of different people are not intertwined with polytheism on the same level. Sometimes ninety nine percent of faith is mixed with one percent polytheism and at other times .polytheism is so high that it completely destroys belief in Allah

There is no doubt that we have all been contaminated by sin, but is it possible for a person who has spent all their lives in sin and vanity to decide to quit sin and become truly faithful and sincere in his beliefs? Beyond the shadow of doubt, this is possible and even after sixty years of living in sin and vanity, a person can become truthful if he firmly decides to, on the condition that he repents for his past and makes up his mind to spend the rest of his life obeying Allah. He has to conduct himself in a way that is pleasing to Allah; his sleep, his wakefulness, his association with people

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.Surat al-Jathiyah ۴۵:۲۳ -١

outside and with his family at home all have to be done for the sake of pleasing Allah. This is possible, but it is not to be attained in a short period of time and a person does not become sincerely faithful quickly. Sincerity is a habit that is attainable by means of .long and continuous effort

A person who makes up his mind to become a sincere believer after many years of living in sin has to strive very hard to acquire the habit of sincerity in the same precise meaning that we have explained. It is possible that an individual may have to practice and exert constant effort for two years before he can acquire the habit of sincerity, in which case if he becomes truthful his rank will be higher than the rank of one who practiced for one year to attain this level and the reward and recompense of a person

.who strove for four years is as well more

In the same manner, the rank and reward of a man who spends even more years attaining sincerity of faith would be higher than that of the one who spends less time and effort, and certainly the rank of one who decides to be obedient to Allah from the time of puberty would have a higher rank than the rest of the people. He truly decides to traverse no other path save the way of Allah and to think of nothing except divine thoughts and not even imagine

.committing sin

It is hard for us to accept the point that man can arrive at a level where he does not even think or even imagine committing sin, but there have been people among our scholars who attained this station. They have narrated that the deceased Sayyid Radi and Sayyid Murtada, may Allah be pleased with them, wanted to recite congregational prayers. Sayyid Murtada—who was the elder brother of Sayyid Radi—wanted to allusively and implicitly tell his younger brother there was not the least doubt in his .being a just man and thus fully qualified to lead the congregational prayers

He addressed his younger brother, "The one between us who has not committed sin yet should lead the congregational prayers." He wanted to implicitly tell his younger brother that he had not committed sin since the days of his puberty. Sayyid Radi responded, "The one who has not imagined [or thought about] committing sin should .lead the prayers." That is to say, Sayyid Radi had not even imagined committing sin

Such an individual who has not contaminated himself with sin from the early years of his youth and has only set eyes on Allah and has always endeavored to discharge his .divine duties is without the least doubt not far from the station of the truthful

Lesson ۳۰: The Significance of Invocation of Allah, Constructive Social Interaction and the Criteria for Choosing Friends

point

This section of the Noble Prophet's (S) advice to Abu Dharr is related to socializing and associating with other people. One of the issues which the scholars of ethics have mentioned in their books

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and about which there are differences, to a greater or lesser extent, is whether it is better in the viewpoint of Islam to associate and socialize with other people or seek seclusion and solitude. There are a great deal of hadiths in regard to the importance of socializing with other people, one of these is that Imam al-Baqir ('a) stated:

"At the time of his martyrdom, Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) called his children al-Hasan, al-Husayn, Muhammad Hanafiyyah and also his younger children and pronounced his last will and testament to them; at the end of his will, he stated, 'O my children! Associate with people in such a way that they will miss you when you are absent from them and cry for you when you die'."(١)

The scholars of ethics have also made mention of a number of benefits deriving from reclusion and solitude; benefits which appear to suggest that it is distasteful to associate with other people. In contrast, they have also alluded to the rewards of socializing with people and have enumerated harms resulting from solitude.

The Benefits of Reclusion and Solitude

Some of the benefits of reclusion and solitude which have been enumerated include the following:

a) Secluding oneself from the society helps a person find free time to worship, meditate about worldly and heavenly affairs, fall in love with invocation of Allah, conceive divine secrets and reflect about the wonders of Allah's creatures. Associating with people prevents man from procuring these superior graces. It has been said that it was due to the invaluable role

p: ١١٣

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۴۲, p. ۲۴۷ -۱

of self-reclusion in edification of the soul that Prophet Muhammad (S) used to go alone to the mountain of Hira’ at the threshold of his prophetic mission and would embark upon invocation of Allah and seclude himself from the people until the light of prophethood shined upon his soul and, after that, the people no longer prevented him .from Allah

Even though he existed physically among the people, his heart was constantly with Allah and invocation and remembrance of Him was always alive in his soul. Without the divine power of the prophetic mission and without attaining the station of proximity to Allah, man cannot strike a balance between association with the people .and constant supplication of Allah

b) As a result of seclusion from the people, man extricates himself from a great deal of sins, like ۱) gossip and ۲) sanctimony, which usually occur on account of associating with people. The reason is that man becomes afflicted by ostentation and hypocrisy as a result of mingling with people. This occurs because the people will hurt or aggrieve a man who does not compromise with them and who makes up his mind to prevent them from ugly deeds and indecent speech. In contrast, he becomes afflicted with sanctimony once he compromises with them and quietly concedes to their ugly deeds. ۳) Silence in regard to bidding good and forbidding evil; ۴) not purifying the human nature and disposition from mean ethical qualities and indecent deeds which derive from ardent desire for the

.world. Ardent desire for the world itself is aroused on account of mixing with people

It is natural that when a person is not self-built and has not reached a level where he can harness and control his appetitive soul and restrain it from error, he commits sin whilst in a group; and most often conversation and associating with others provides .the background for becoming tainted by sin

c) It is for the purpose of liberating oneself from quarrels and disputes, protecting one's religion and restraining one's heart from social deception (because there are no gatherings devoid of bigotry, hatred and animosity) that a person avoids groups and .assemblies and becomes immune from deviations

d) Freedom from harm from others: sometimes people aggrieve others by means of gossip. At other times they distress other people by way of being suspicious towards them, making false accusations or by means of covetousness. It is for this reason that when man abstains from the presence of other people, he becomes free from these issues, but he will not be free from the evil of their jealousies and enmity as long as he associates and socializes with people or takes part in their activities. At every moment sedition and intrigue is being plotted with the aim of striking a blow to him so as to .bring him down from his rank and status

e) Solitude and seclusion from the people results in man not coveting what other .people own and in other people not begrudging what he owns

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Man's tranquility and comfort is guaranteed in severing people's grudges against him because man can never please everyone's expectations. It is for this reason that .embarking on edification of character is better than striving to please people

If man wants to discharge all of the people's rights such as burying the dead, visiting the sick and taking part in various ceremonies, he will spend much of his time and not fulfill his more important duties and if he decides to discharge some of his social duties and neglect others, those people whose functions he did not attend to will complain and not accept whatever excuses he has to offer. Thus, he feels indebted to people and this in itself is cause of enmity and ill-feeling. However, a person who completely .secludes himself from these issues is less likely to be entangled by them

f) A person who lives in reclusion and solitude is liberated from witnessing proud, stubborn and foolish people, all of whom cause irritation. A certain man was asked, "Why do you look sad?" He responded, "Because I was looking at the rich and the

proud." Therefore, from the worldly perspective, witnessing the rich and the proud affects man in an undesirable manner and from the point of view of the hereafter, man does not hesitate to talk about them in their absence once he has been vexed by them. In addition to that, once man has been hurt by other people's gossip, false accusation and jealousies, he does not

p: ۱۱۶

hesitate to retaliate and all these result in the corruption of man's religion and faith; it is for this reason that a man who secludes himself from people remains safe from all .these calamities

The Benefits of Association and Coexistence with Others

point

A great deal of religious as well as worldly goals and needs are attained with the help of other people and cannot be achieved without association and coexistence with other human beings. Therefore, that which is attained by associating with other people is lost by reclusion and seclusion and it is natural that losing those benefits is one of the detriments of reclusion. With regard to what has been mentioned, some of :the benefits of associating with people must thus be enumerated

a) Teaching and learning from other people

The importance of teaching and learning from other people is very clear to everyone and is one of the superior forms of worship which cannot be attained except by mixing and associating with others. A person who chooses to live in reclusion and solitude is inhibited from the important duties of acquisition of knowledge and its dissemination and without the least doubt man is afflicted by irreparable losses and privations if he lags behind in religious and secular knowledge as a result of living in seclusion from .knowledgeable people and does not learn the divine laws

b) Deriving benefit from other people and helping other people

It is natural that deriving benefit from other people can only be attained by

associating, affiliating and conversing with them and this is not feasible except by mixing with others and a person who wants to derive benefit from other

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people cannot be a recluse and must have relations with people through coexistence with others. Of course, one's endeavors and deeds have to be carried out in the way .of Allah's pleasure

Helping other people or acting in their interests implies that an individual must do so by means of his property, through his actions and through his advice to solve the problems of others. In truth, rising to help other people has a lot of divine rewards and these divine rewards cannot be attained except by mixing and associating with other people. A person who can help other people bear their loads and solve their problems has attained great virtue and this cannot be achieved in solitude. A person who is in seclusion can only manage to perform personal worship like recommendable prayers .and other individual duties

c) Training and educating other people as well as self-edification

Self-edification and refinement of the soul denote endeavor and struggle to cure diseases of the heart and bearing with patience the bad habits of people and the harm they inflict for the sake of repressing the soul and controlling its carnal desires and appetites. This matter can only be achieved under the auspices of coexisting with other human beings. Constructive association with people is better than seclusion and reclusion for a person who has not yet embarked on edification of character and refinement of the soul and who cannot control the passions by observing divine .injunctions

Educating and training other people implies warning them about the consequences of ill deeds and restraining them from sinning

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in the same way that a teacher behaves with his student. The fruits of reclusion have

to be compared with the results of associating with people before the best way of life .can be selected

d) Friendship and affection with other people

This important issue is achieved by attending gatherings, socializing and fraternizing with other people. Of course, we ought to abstain from friendship and affection which results in doing prohibited deeds and make friendships on the basis of Allah's desires .and the injunctions of divine law

We should make friends with those who increase our perfection and knowledge, not those who cause us to waste time on vain pursuits and squander our material and spiritual aptitudes. Most often, a friend and companion play an important role in the attainment of prosperity and perfection or misfortune and villainy. It is for this reason .that one must take the utmost caution and care

:The Noble Prophet (S) states

A person plays a vital role in his friend's religion. Therefore, every one of you ought to" (be cautious with whom he becomes friends."(١

In regard to the importance of companionship with divine scholars, Luqman, the Wise, :thus told his son

O my son! Associate with divine scholars and be humble towards them. Verily hearts" become lively under the auspices of wisdom, in the same way that raindrops bring the (earth to life."(٢

e) To derive and bring divine reward

Another benefit of associating with other people is that man derives divine reward from being at their service and other human beings too gain divine reward from being .at the service of man

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۴, p. ۱۹۴ -۱

.Ibid., vol. ۱, p. ۲۰۴ -۲

Deriving divine reward is attained by taking part in the burial rites of the dead, visiting the sick in hospitals, going to the homes of acquaintances and friends and taking part .in their sorrows and joys

Most often, these issues result in strong brotherly ties and making the hearts of Muslims cheerful and this in itself has a lot of divine reward. However, doing good deeds towards others even takes place when one's door is open to other people so that they may come to his home in times of hardship and loss to express their condolences and congratulate him at times of joy and celebration. All these things make other people derive divine benefit. In the same way, the people derive divine .benefit if a religious scholar opens his door to them so that they can visit him

f) Humility and modesty

The superior quality of humility and modesty arises in man as a result associating with other people and in all truthfulness this is one of the highest stations which man can attain and doubtless that it cannot be attained in solitude and seclusion because sometimes the result of reclusion is self-pride. A story has been narrated that there once lived a wise scholar who had authored three hundred and sixty philosophical works. As a result, he conjectured that he had attained a very high position in the eyes .of Allah

Allah inspired the prophet of his time to tell that wise man that he had filled the earth with hypocrisy and sorrow

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and that Allah was not pleased with his literary works. After hearing this, the scholar chose to live in solitude and reclusion and distanced himself from the people and went to live in a hole underground and said to himself, "Now Allah has become pleased with ".me

Allah once again inspired His prophet to tell that scholar that He was still not pleased with him. Allah would only be pleased with him once he associated with the people and bore their injuries with patience. Thereafter, that wise man attached himself to the people and mixed with them in the streets and the bazaar and would associate with them and eat food with them until Allah finally inspired his prophet to tell that wise .man that now He was pleased with him

There are many people who have chosen to remain at home and seclude themselves from others and this same seclusion from people becomes a cause of pride. Again, this pride becomes a cause of their not attending social functions because they .conceive themselves to be higher than the rest of the people

g) Acquisition of experience

Experience is attained by associating with others because man becomes aware of the states, thoughts and deeds of people after becoming acquainted with their actions and the leaps and lapses which they have in the courses of their lives. As a result of this, he chooses the provisions he needs in order to traverse the correct path in life. With all certainty, innate intellect is not enough to comprehend the

p: ۱۲۱

advisable or expedient things of religion and the world on its own and experience helps it in this direction and someone who has not had enough experience cannot .derive benefit from solitude and reclusion

It has become clear from the previous discussion that solitude and reclusion cannot be denied in totality and associating with people at all times cannot be said to be entirely advisable, but the ruling or decision is dependent on the spirit and states of every individual and the spirit of his companions and the motive for friendship and companionship. In short, seclusion from people causes enmity and hatred and excessive mixture with them can result in bad deeds; therefore, man ought to .observe moderation between solitude and association with others

Fondness and Brotherhood, Blessings of Allah

Without the least doubt, whatever Allah, the Exalted, has created—ranging from the mountains, the valleys and the seas to man and the animals—all are blessings. In technical terms, this cosmos has a coordinated order and its components are in relation and harmony with each other. In truth, a perfect order rules over the universe and everything is exactly where it must be and all creatures derive benefit .from one another as a result of the close relationships which exist among them

According to this principle, human beings have to be useful to one another and help one another to move in the direction of the aim for which Allah, the Exalted, has created them; and that goal is termed 'perfection'. From another perspective, although Allah, the Exalted, has

p: ١٢٢

principally created human beings to be blessings to one another so that they can traverse the course of perfection, man is able to change these blessings of Allah into :calamities and villainy because he is a free-willed agent. As Allah states

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ كُفْرًا وَأَحَلُّوا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبَوَارِ

Have you not regarded those who have changed Allah's blessings with ingratitude," (and landed their people in the house of ruin?"(١

With regard to what has been mentioned, people can make themselves a blessing for other human beings in order for others to derive benefit from them or they can become a cause of trouble and problems for other people. Association, brotherhood and fraternity are among the greatest divine blessings in which Allah has placed :particular grace; as He has stated

... وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا...

And remember Allah's blessings upon you when you were enemies. Then He..." (brought your hearts together, so you became brothers with His blessing..."(٢

Therefore, the value of brotherly love and affection, which is a blessing of Allah, must

be understood and also steps must be taken to strengthen this intimacy and a Muslim must try to be a helper, confidant and sympathizer of his Muslim brother and not to be .the cause of his displeasure or become an oppressor to him

:Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states

A Muslim is the brother of his fellow Muslim; he is his brother's eyes, mirror and" guide. A Muslim neither betrays a fellow

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.Surat Ibrahim ۱۴:۲۸ -۱
.Surat Al 'Imran ۳:۱۰۳ -۲

Muslim nor does he oppress him. A Muslim does not lie to his brother and does not (gossip about him."(۱

However, it cannot be asserted that association and social intercourse with all human beings is beneficial, and in contrast it cannot be said that socializing with people is entirely harmful so that man must not associate with anyone; therefore, certain criteria have to be taken into consideration by means of which constructive and productive socialization will be separated from unproductive and harmful fraternization. Man has to know with whom to associate in order to be helped in attaining divine and spiritual goals—man needs to distinguish with which people he ought to socialize in order to procure spiritual perfection as well as to be successful in .carrying out his duties

Man has to discern with which people to associate so as to be able to positively influence and constructively impress them because productive guidance of other human beings gives fruit to human perfection. A person himself achieves prosperity once he realizes his responsibility to help other human beings—whether materially or spiritually, and of course spiritual help is more valuable than material help—and undertakes the encouragement of others to perform their duties and guides them to pursue the path of bliss and prosperity because he has worshipped Allah by means of

.discharging his responsibilities and consequently has become more complete

In reality in this world, whatever service we do for other human beings, especially if that assistance is done with a correct and sincere

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۲, p. ۱۶۶ -۱

intention as well as according to divine legal criteria, we have actually done service to ourselves; that is to say, we have worshipped Allah and its reward will be granted to us. Therefore, social intercourse is invaluable for human beings if it becomes the cause of aiding others and/or deriving spiritual good from them and thereby becoming more focused on one's goals. Without doubt, socialization is beneficial if as a result of .it man's knowledge increases and his soul grows more complete

In contrast, social intercourse with people who not only do not remind man about Allah but also lead him towards negligence and invite him by means of their words and deeds towards spiritual collapse, moral decline and all sorts of deviation is neither desirable nor constructive. It is for this reason that not just any person should be chosen for friendship and intimacy. High qualities and valuable attributes have to be the criteria for selecting friends and companions and of course the prominent qualities of a friend and companion have the most beneficial effects. Sometimes perhaps there are worldly and material benefits such as wealth and position to be derived from friends, but the best rewards to be derived from friendship are religious .blessings

The Criteria for Choosing Friends and Associates

In regard to the hardships of selecting suitable friends and the positive and negative influences of good and bad friends, Islamic sources have topics specially dedicated to explaining the criteria of choosing companions, and the saints [awliya'] of Allah have enumerated the attributes and qualities of

suitable friends. One of the instances where the qualities of a suitable friend were expounded was when the Noble Prophet (S) was asked in regard to who the best associate was. He responded:

"The best friend is a person whom looking at reminds you about Allah, whose words increase your knowledge and whose deeds remind you about the hereafter."(1)

Or when the companions of Prophet Jesus ('a) asked him with which people to associate, he responded:

"Associate with a person whom looking at reminds you about Allah, whose deeds make you desirous of the hereafter and whose knowledge increase your logic and intelligence." Then he also commanded them, "Become close to Allah by abstaining from sinners and become friends with Allah by making enmity with evil-doers and please Allah by annoying the iniquitous."(2)

The Gracious Qur'an quotes a man who met with calamity as a result of deviating from the right path and the way of the prophets of Allah and thus oppressed himself and on this account became caught up in the fire of divine wrath and bit his fingers in regret and sorrow, saying:

يَا وَيْلَتَى لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلاَنًا خَلِيلاً * لَقَدْ أَضَلَّنِي عَنْ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَنِي وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِلإِنسَانِ خَذُولاً

"Woe to me! I wish I had not taken such a one as a friend! Certainly he led me astray from the Reminder after it had come to me, and Satan is a deserter of man."(3)

This kind of verse denotes the fact that one of the causes of becoming misled

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۱, p. ۱۸۶.

۲- Ibid., p. ۱۸۹, hadith ۱۸.

۳- Surat al-Furqan ۲۵:۲۸-۲۹.

is unsuitable friends and companionship with those who are misled; therefore, a

believer ought to abstain from unsuitable friendships and refrain from unhealthy gatherings. Of course, people are not the same: some individuals are so built and have such strong wills that they do not fall under the influence of other people no matter what the circumstances but instead influence those around them, but there are others who are influenced by whoever they associate with as a result of weak determination and shaky faith and are easily impressed by the conduct and morals of those around them. Therefore, man has to be cautious with whom he associates and who influences him. Those who are stronger, even if they are not influenced by other people, have to observe from whom they derive more benefit and set priorities in .their social intercourse

Therefore, in whatever condition, if we are in a group of people who remind us more about Allah and the hereafter, increase our knowledge, encourage us to do more good deeds, act in the service of other people, and we easily find ourselves traversing the right path as a result of their help, such association is certainly correct and productive; however, in other than this case association with people could produce undesirable and bad results. Therefore, it cannot be asserted that all assemblies are definitely good and man has to go into every gathering and associate with every person on the pretext that amiability and amicability are good; in reality man

.deceives himself with such fanciful thoughts

Association with every person is not beneficial—most often a person initially enters a gathering with a pure intention and thereafter comprehends that association at that place is not in his interests because the people present are gossiping, lying, talking vanity, making obscene jokes and encouraging him to be a mammon, or their conduct is such that it attracts a person to the world and makes him heedless of the hereafter. In this case, one ought not to take part in the gathering on the pretext of amicability and amiability unless he has such spiritual strength that he can influence the others and unless despite knowing that their conduct is indecent, he still is sure that he can guide them with advice and admonition. Such association, which is an instance of

bidding the good and forbidding the evil and encouraging others towards what is .right, enjoys special importance in the divine law of Islam, is desirable and productive

:In a certain hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states

Be cautious with whom you talk, because a man's friends are brought together and" embodied before him once he dies; if they were good people, he is placed in the group of the good ones and if they were bad individuals, he is put in the group of bad (people."(۱

Therefore, if the question is asked about what is advisable according to the Islamic point of view, whether socialization with people or seclusion from them is preferable, :the response would be thus

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۴, p. ۴۵۱ -۱

it is not true that keeping company with people is advisable in all instances nor that solitude and reclusion are undesirable, but secluding oneself from a person who encourages man to sin and causes one to deviate from the right path, separation from a person who causes man's faith to become weak, dissociation from a person .who incites polytheism and doubt in man's inner soul is very proper and necessary

On the other hand, abstaining from socialization and adopting solitude deprives man of social issues and graces which Allah has allotted to man in the different arenas of man's social life and prevents man from discharging his communal duties. In reality, the negative effects of solitude are that it becomes a cause of leaving aside a great deal of incumbent duties. Man is held back from acquiring knowledge and other perfections which can only be attained under the auspices of social life. He becomes dispossessed of healthy ethics and habits as well as the material and spiritual help of other human beings which are beneficial for him in this world and the hereafter. If it were a basic principle that every person ought to live in solitude and busy oneself with worship in seclusion and not associate with other people, a lot of the social laws of

Islam would be suspended and abandoned. It is for this reason that both solitude and socialization are advisable in their proper instances.

Living in reclusion is not automatically advisable, except for the sake of performing

acts of worship with the intention of keeping aloof from sanctimony and for the sake of having more attention and concentration and so that day to day encumbrances and association with the people do not become an impediment for worship which must be done either in solitude or at night because the night is a suitable opportunity for worship and invocation of Allah since man finds time to meditate about himself after being relieved from daily duties and dedicate his heart to the remembrance and invocation of Allah. Allah states:

إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطْأً وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلاً * إِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلاً

"Indeed the rising by night is the firmest way to tread and the best corrective of speech, for indeed during the day you have drawn out engagements."(١)

Man ought not to pick up the rosary during the day and sit in a secluded corner busy glorifying the Lord, but he has to be engaged in the social functions of people and discharge his duties alongside them. There will not be teaching and learning as well as no preaching and admonishing if we avoid socialization and association with the people by sitting alone in a room at home or spending all our time alone in a mosque; likewise, calling towards righteousness and helping of the poor and needy will not be feasible by living in seclusion from the people.

Even worse, political duties on the local and international arena and helping the rest of the Muslims who live

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١- Surat al-Muzzammil ٧٣:٦-٧.

in other Muslim countries will not be discharged. On the other hand, man ought not to

think that because these good blessings and virtues are found in socialization with the people, every gathering and mixing with every person in any form imaginable is advisable; such thoughts result in the deviation and misguidance of man. As has previously been explained, man has to try to observe divine expediencies and the legal aspects of socialization so as not to be prevented from his main goal of eternal .bliss

:Imam al-Baqir (‘a) thus advised one of his companions by the name of Salih

Follow a person who makes you cry and gives you instructional advice, and do not“ follow one who makes you laugh and deceives you; verily soon you will meet Allah and (you will be aware of your deeds.”(۱

The Greatness of Invocation of Allah while among the Heedless

If man unfortunately finds himself in a group of people who are negligent of the hereafter and inattentive to Allah, what ought he to do in order to remain safe from being contaminated by sin? If he leaves the group, they will not react decently towards him, and most often they wrongly conceive that he fancies himself as being .purer and higher than they are

According to Islamic ethics, man ought not to perceive himself as better than other people and his deeds too ought not to leave such an impression on others. As the Noble Prophet (S) stated to Abu Dharr in one of his pieces of advice which has :previously been discussed

Man does“

.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۴, p. ۴۵۱ -۱

not attain the level of religious scholarship unless he conceives all human beings vis-à-vis Allah, the Exalted, as camels devoid of comprehension and thereafter look at ”.himself and perceive himself as lower than the rest of the people

Even a righteous man ought not to conceive himself as higher than a corrupt human being; all too often it occurs that a corrupt man repents and his sins become forgiven while that believing man remains self-contented with his acts of worship thus !becoming afflicted by pride and self-conceit which cause his perdition

Therefore, sometimes there exist conditions which necessitate that a person ought not to seclude himself from the community in order that he may not react negatively and so that he may not bear ill thoughts in regard to others. In addition to that, sometimes it is necessary to remain in a group of sinners and evil-doers in order to enjoin the good and forbid the evil as well as to warn them about the ill consequences of their deeds; for this reason, presence among them is a means of bidding .righteousness and forbidding sin

However, things do not always happen in this way. That is to say, sometimes a group of people are not doers of good and benevolence, but they are negligent and speak vanity; nonetheless, they do not commit sin and do not do forbidden deeds. They act in such a way that admonishing them is not incumbent. In regard to this group of (people, the Noble Prophet (S

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:states

O Abu Dharr! A person who invokes Allah among the negligent is like a person who“ ”.continues to fight after everyone has run away from the jihad

In the case that man is in the midst of negligent people from whom he does not derive benefit and reward, he ought to try to make his heart attentive to Allah, the Exalted, in order to be like a person who remains alone on the battlefield fighting and resisting the enemy after everyone has fled from the jihad. It has previously been said that Allah boasts to the angels and takes pride in a person who remains alone on the .battleground fighting and resisting the enemy after everyone has taken flight

Likewise, Allah, the Exalted, takes pride in a believer whose heart is permanently

attentive to Allah whilst in a group that is negligent of Him and preoccupied by mean .worldly affairs which are not pleasing to Allah

Man's Responsibilities regarding His Speech

O Abu Dharr! A good companion is better than solitude and solitude is better than a“ bad associate and good words are better than silence and silence is better than evil ”.words

Naturally, the conditions for discussion are prepared when one associates with other people. What is better in this case—silence or speech? As we have already stated in regard to the principle of socialization and solitude, the criteria are various. Sometimes socialization is advisable and at other times solitude is better. In regard to .silence and talking as well, we do not have a stable measure

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We ought to observe with what motive we speak. Talking is beneficial and good when it is done with a divine motive and for the sake of benefiting other human beings as .well as reminding them about Allah or for instruction of divine laws and issues

In any case, good speech is that which is made for the purpose of guiding and leading other people towards desirable perfection, whether it is directly in relation to spiritual perfection and to the hereafter or it is a prerequisite for attaining spiritual perfection and eternal bliss despite being related to worldly affairs because the intention of the speaker is to make the listener aware and show him the way of spiritual growth and ascendancy by way of material means and channels for the reason that man is impelled to make use of material means while traversing the path of humanity and perfection. However, when neither he nor other human beings derive benefit from his .speech, it is better for him to remain silent

What is interesting is that the word used in this hadith is 'dictation' [imla'], not 'speaking' [takallum]. Dictation denotes that once someone is talking, the other has to be writing and noting down what the speaker is saying. Whatever man says is not dictation, because he does not always speak in order for the others to write down

what he says. Therefore, why did the Noble Prophet (S) not say good talk is better than silence? There are two points which can

p: ۱۳۴

:be mentioned for using the term dictation

The first point: When man speaks, his words become recorded in the mind of the listener and it becomes one of the stockpiles of the listener's brain. Therefore, we have to be cautious what we record in the mind of the listener and the effects that remain in his mind. We have to mind that speaking does not only mean that we expel and utter words from our mouths, but that speech is the source of an effect and it can be said that when a person talks, the listeners are writing and noting down that which is being said in their minds. For this reason, man must be cautious in regard to what effects he produces in the hearts and souls of other human beings. If what he says is good, then his speech is proper and it leaves a good effect but if his speech is not good, why should he cause objectionable things to be recorded in the minds of other !?people

The second point: There are two angels recording whatever man says and that is why :the term dictation has been employed. Allah, the Exalted, states

إِذْ يَتَلَقَّى الْمُتَلَقِّيَانِ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيدٌ * مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

When the twin recorders record [his deeds], seated on the right hand and on the left" (—he says no word but that there is a ready observer beside him."(۱

:Elsewhere, Allah states

كَلَّا بَلْ تُكَذِّبُونَ بِالدِّينِ * وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَافِظِينَ * كِرَامًا

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.Surat Qaf ۵۰:۱۷-۱۸ -۱

كَاتِبِينَ * يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ

"No indeed! Rather you deny the Retribution. Indeed, there are over you watchers, noble writers; they are aware of what you do."(1)

The Virtue of Sharing Food with a Believer and Abstaining from the Food of Corrupt People

"O Abu Dharr! Do not befriend save a man of faith, nor share your food save with a believing man, nor eat the food of the corrupt."

In this section of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) initially mentions the issue of socialization and after that hints at some of its necessities. One of the necessities and effects of socialization mentioned was speaking with one another, now he mentions eating together with other people. The reason is that under the auspices of socializing with other people, man is obliged to eat with his associates. The Noble Prophet (S) states that man ought not to associate and eat with anyone except believers.

The first effect of eating the food of a corrupt man is being indebted and obliged to him. When a person is a guest of the iniquitous and he eats their food, in return, the sinful person also makes illicit demands which he expects the believer to fulfill. He expects the believer to grant him certain improper favors.

In contrast, when a person does not have any relationship with the corrupt and does not partake of their food, he does not become indebted to them and they cannot have any expectations from him. If one does not have any ties with the iniquitous, he rejects their illicit requests with utmost courage because he conceives their

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۱- Surat al-Infitar ۸۲:۹-۱۱.

requests as lying beyond the realm of his duties. From another point of view, there is no certainty that the food of the sinner is halal (permissible by divine law).

There is no certainty whether the money with which he buys his food is halal or not because he is not committed and devoted to the divine laws of Islam. There is no

surety as to whether he has acquired that money by means of bribery or not. Man can have complete trust in a believer that he has earned his income in a lawful manner but he cannot have the same confidence in a sinner. Most often man partakes of the .sinner's food and later finds out that it was not acquired in a legitimate manner

In addition to what has been mentioned, and as can be derived from certain hadith, dubious food leaves negative effects in the soul of a person even if the person that eats it is not aware that the food he has eaten was not halal. In this regard, prominent scholars have narrated surprising stories. It is said that one of the scholars told his wife that he felt as if he was eating the rotten meat of an animal which had died on its own. His wife became surprised at her husband's words. She embarked upon investigation and found out that an animal had fallen in the well from which they used to draw water in Najaf during those days and they were drinking

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water from that well unaware that it was impure and contaminated. That great !scholar felt the natural effects of that water on his soul

Some of the great scholars never used to accept certain invitations to social gatherings and did not have a habit of eating whatever was offered to them. There is a famous story in regard to a man called Karbala'i Kazim who miraculously and by the special grace of Allah had memorized the Noble Qur'an. During the early days of religious studentship, he used to come to the Madrasah we were residing in as .boarders called Hujjatiyyah

There the religious students used to test him in order to see whether he had truly memorized the Qur'an or not. Karbala'i Kazim was a very surprising memorizer of the Qur'an. He could even recite the Qur'an in reverse order, from the end to the beginning. He even used to know the number of full stops in the Qur'an. This man would not attend just any social gathering he was invited to; however, he would attend some invitations and refuse others. He used to say that after attending some social gatherings, he would feel a heaviness and darkness in his heart that was not there before attending those gatherings. (This story is doubtless beyond our

.(conception, but it is true

The late Ayatullah Haj Aqa Murtada Ha'iri, may Allah be pleased with him, narrates that he had placed a book mixed with verses of the Qur'an and non-Qur'anic words in front of

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Karbala'i Kazim. Karbala'i Kazim was an illiterate man who could not tell the difference between one letter of the alphabet and the other, but he used to place a finger over the words and tell which one was a verse of the Qur'an and which one was not. Aqa Ha'iri said to him, "How do you manage to distinguish the verses of the Qur'an despite being unlearned?" He responded, "The verses of the Qur'an have the light and I distinguish them by means of that light." Yes, such realities exist and we cannot deny .them just because of our incapacity to perceive them

We should try to associate with and to eat with pious people as well as to use the property and accept the gifts of faithful people. Likewise, man has to try to use whatever wealth Allah grants him in the best possible manner because it is a divine blessing. If one buys food with his money, he has to give that food to a man of faith and belief in order for his deeds to be pleasing to Allah and so that, in addition to being eaten, it becomes a cause of establishing a divine connection—not so that the eating .and reception become a cause of vanity

O Abu Dharr! Give your food to a person whom you love in the way of Allah and eat" ".the food of a person who loves you in the way of Allah

People should give food to a person and also eat the

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food of a person with whom they enjoy a relationship of friendship and intimacy and that friendship has a divine root and source. When man gives food to someone, it is clear that he loves that person, but we should observe whether he loves that person ?for the sake of Allah or for other causes

The Noble Prophet (S) advises us to hold gatherings for the sake of Allah so that we may derive the best benefit from them and strengthen divine relationships between people. So often the relationship between people becomes strengthened by means of get-togethers and as divine love grows among Allah's servants, the ranks of the believers also grow; in contrast, if love is not divine and is instead evil, its growth .becomes the cause of man's fall

In addition to the orders to observe the outward laws of halal (permissible) and haram (forbidden)—which are among the emphatic injunctions of divine law—the saints [awliya'] of Allah used to observe more delicate and sensitive issues and used to recommend those same issues to their friends because discharging the wajib (obligatory) and abstaining from the haram (forbidden) is not enough for the growth and ascendancy of man and discharging these duties is only the first step (though unfortunately most of us have contented ourselves with this step). A believer has to have high ambitions and not imagine that he has arrived at the final destination by observing the wajib and haram, but has to know that the second step is

observing the legal etiquettes and the recommendable acts of divine law some of which have been mentioned, amongst them the etiquette of socializing, the etiquette .of speech, the etiquette of eating and amiability and abstaining from dubious acts

After traversing this stage and taking the second step, there still remains a long way to go for one to attain human perfection. He has to scrutinize the intentions of his heart and see what things he harbors in it. What are the motives of his conduct? Even .if he does a good and commendable deed, he has to observe what his intention is

Finally, inspecting the heart and scrutinizing the soul are among the levels of man's perfection and one whose outward deeds have not yet been purified and cleansed have not attained that level yet. The last level is that the saints [awliya'] of Allah try to concentrate their hearts only on Allah and to make their hearts the manifestation of Allah's love. Their hope is in Him and they fear none but Him. They live in such a way that it seems as though they have nothing to do with anyone save Allah despite the

fact that they associate with everyone and talk to other human beings and attend to their social lives.

In the Hadith al-Mi'raj(1), in regard to the soul of the believer who has been guided to the divine presence, Allah states:

"That soul will be asked, 'How did you abstain from the world?' It will respond, 'O my

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1- Asecnt of the Holy Prophet (S) to heaven.

Lord! By Your glory and Honor, I have not conceived the world since I was created but instead was always afraid of You'."(1)

That believer is not aware of the world because his attention is only focused on Allah and he is unaware of issues which are not related to Allah.

We too can attain those levels if we strive hard to strengthen our determination and embark upon edification of character and purification of the soul. We ought not to content ourselves with the outward aspect of our deeds or become proud with what we have achieved and done so far but instead try to look into our hearts and souls.

Lesson ۳۱: The Tongue, A Means of Guidance or Misdirection

point

This section of the sayings of the Noble Prophet (S) is related to the tongue and its control. Of course, in the previous lesson there was discussion regarding the need to control the tongue, but the present saying points out that man ought to take extra caution with regard to what he says. With regard to this point, it is important that we look in our books of hadith at sections especially dedicated to the manners of talking and the etiquettes of the effects of utterance.

Speech that is necessary and speech that is unadvisable and must be avoided have been mentioned. Before our presentation and examination of the advice of the Noble

Prophet (S), it is appropriate to explain some issues in this regard. First, we will point out that the tongue is a blessing among the many blessings

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۷, p. ۲۷ -۱

of Allah and then we will enumerate some of the weaknesses and blights of the .tongue

Deriving Benefit from the Tongue and Other Members of the Body for the Purpose of Spiritual Ascension and Growth

All the gifts which Allah, the Exalted, has granted to man—whether they are physical and outward members, like the ears, eyes, hands and legs, or internal parts and whether they are immaterial qualities such as psychological and spiritual faculties, like the power of thought and imagination, which are related to the brain or the feelings and sensations of the soul; in short, that which is related to the soul and body of man —are all ways and means of attaining perfection and not goals in and of themselves. .Not even their results and effects are the ultimate goal of man

We should use the eyes to look at things which draw us closer to ultimate perfection and to Allah. In the same way, we have to listen with our ears to things which bring about human perfection and, in addition, use the rest of the members of the body— .one of which is the tongue—in the same way

We have to say things which bring about our spiritual ascension and are pleasing to Allah. We should use all the gifts of Allah with the purpose of gaining proximity to Him and to attain human perfection and we have to know that they are not just means of .sporting and games such that we can use our faculties in whatever way we fancy

Man should not conceive the results and desires of members of the body like the tongue as

his ultimate goals because the original aim is something much higher than these and speech is by far not the principal goal in man's life. It is for this reason that the tongue has to be employed in the way of good and perfection. In a hadith, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) :states

The charity of the tongue is giving advice to the Muslims and awakening the" (negligent as well as glorifying and invoking Allah much."(١

Talking is a means and because Allah's goal in creating man is that he ought to attain human perfection and proximity to Him, he has to use the tongue to derive the best benefit, not to use it as a means of procuring misfortune. He has to speak with wisdom and refrain from words which result in social and spiritual decline because a person's words are symbols of his personality and status. Therefore, if man speaks without deliberation and does not take the fruits of his words into consideration, he :reveals the inner essence of his self. As Imam 'Ali ('a) states

(Speak so that you may be known, since man is hidden under his tongue."(٢"

Elsewhere, Imam 'Ali ('a) enumerates the ill effects of vain speech and the lack of :thought in regard to the fruits of the words of the hypocrites

The hypocrite speaks whatever comes to his tongue, without knowing what is in his" (favor and what goes against him."(٣

:In contrast to a believer who

.When a believer intends to say something, he thinks it over in his mind"

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٩۶, p. ٧ -١
.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۴٣٢, pithy aphorisms ٣٩٢, trans. Shahidi -٢
.Ibid., p. ١٨۴, sermon [khutbah] ١٧۶ -٣

(If it is good he discloses it, but if it is bad he lets it remain concealed."(١

Although we may generally know that we have to gain proximity to Allah by means of the tongue, the subject of discussion revolves around the manner of gaining this proximity. In this regard, it has to be explained that words and speech sometimes fall in the category of worship of Allah, such as the words man utters at the time of supplication and ritual prayer where the words are considered to be either obligatory .or recommended acts of worship

However, in other uses of the tongue are means of making others know what he has concealed within his heart and make them know his desires and intentions. In making others know his desires, man should have divine intentions. He has to know what issues and what speech is pleasing to Allah and this can result in him becoming closer to Allah and can be a cause of gaining His reward in the hereafter. It is in this case that .a person attains divine wishes by means of using his tongue and speaking

In some instances, the advisability and desirability of words has to be distinguished by the help of the divine law of Islam, otherwise a person himself does not know the .bounds and characteristics of desirable talk

In a lot of instances one can discern the goodness of his speech by means of the intellect and comprehend whether what he says is desirable, incumbent or

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.Ibid -۱

recommended. In case man has the intention of pleasing none but Allah, his words are considered to be worship. An example is when one wants to defend an oppressed man by means of his speech or exact justice on behalf of an oppressed person by .taking an oppressor to task

This instance is a case of “intellectual independence” wherein the intellect is not dependent on the dictates of divine law. If no divine law had ever been inspired to mankind, man would still have comprehended that defending the weak and oppressed was incumbent and if one were able to defend the oppressed by means of

speaking, then that would be pleasing and gratifying to Allah. Even if one were not able to fully comprehend the obligation of speaking out in defense of the weak and .oppressed, he would at least conceive its goodness and desirability

We all know that it is very good and desirable to stroke the head of an orphan and make him happy and that abating the sorrow and sadness of a believing brother is good. In such circumstances, man's deeds are considered to be worship if he makes the intention to please Allah. In contrast with these situations, in other instances we may not realize the limits and cannot distinguish the realm of the permissibility of certain actions and, like divine injunctions, the lawmaker has to explain them to us. Even though the intellect may conceive the generalities, the characteristics, conditions and limits of those instances are

determined by divine law and they are placed at our disposal by means of inference .from the sources of Islamic jurisprudence

Therefore, in such instances we must follow divine injunctions. There are also instances which we know are not pleasing to Allah. Acting upon such deeds is not correct, man sins if he does these forbidden actions, he will be punished and because these deeds are not pleasing to Allah, they cannot be discharged with the intention of .worship

The wisdom of these instances is independently distinguished by the intellect and there is no need to receive the injunctions from the divine legislator. Examples are vexing other people by means of the tongue, lying, false accusation, and spoiling relationships between two believers by means of what one says all of which are .detestable and hated by the intellect

We conclude that we ourselves clearly conceive the goodness and badness of some of our words and in other instances divine law explains the limits and requirements of .correct and proper speech

Method of Deriving Benefit from the Tongue and Avoiding Troubles It Causes

We have to bear in mind that the tongue is one of the greatest gifts of Allah and one of His most delicate of creations. Even though its size is small, its devotion or evil can be great because disbelief and faith are made apparent by means of it and these two are the utmost limits of obedience and disobedience. It is for this reason that effort has to be made to control the tongue because leaving it free can result in

.a lot of harm

A person remains safe from the calamities of the tongue once he controls it by means of divine injunctions and laws. He must never leave it free to utter whatever the heart desires but only that which is necessary for the worldly life and hereafter, and he must try to hold his tongue in instances where he senses worldly danger or danger in regard to the hereafter. The tongue is the biggest means of the devil for deceiving and misleading man; it is for this reason that silence has been praised in hadiths. As :the Noble Prophet (S) states

"Every person who keeps silent attains redemption."(۱)

:In another hadith, he states

"The faith of man does not become firm until his heart becomes resolute and his heart does not become resolute until his tongue becomes unwavering."(۲)

The tongue has to be controlled against defects such as lies, false accusation, gossiping and other such things and made to utter decent and acceptable words so that harm does not arise from it. Words have to be spoken where befitting and problems resolved by means of speech, so that man might build a palace for himself in paradise. Still, if a person, who is able to amass invaluable treasures, amasses straw instead, he has made regrettable losses. This is the similitude of a person who quits invocation of Allah and embarks upon deeds that do not earn him any benefit. Even though his words do not constitute sin, because he has lost that

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧٧, p. ٩٠, hadith ٢ -١
.Ibid., vol. ٧١, p. ٢٨۶ -٢

which is procured by invocation of Allah, he has incurred losses. Imam al-Sadiq ('a) :quotes the Noble Prophet (S) in regard to the attributes of the saints [awliya'] of Allah

The saints [awliya'] of Allah enjoined silence upon themselves and their silence was" invocation of Allah, they looked and their looking was taking lesson, they spoke and their words were wisdom, they associated with the people and their socialization was (a blessing."(١

It is in view of the role of the tongue in bringing about either prosperity or everlasting misfortune and even more important its function in edifying the community or ravaging the ethical foundations of a society that Allah and His saints [awliya'] have made a great deal of recommendations that people must endeavor to control their tongues and, through awareness of correct social etiquettes and Islamic conduct and by making the saints [awliya'] of Allah and their speech and behavioral manners their role models, use their tongues to build themselves and the society. It is for this reason that the best way to control the tongue and use it is observing the speech etiquettes .(of the prophets and the saints [awliya'] of Allah ('a

The prophets ('a) used to show the best way of socializing with the people, an example of which are the logical proofs and demonstrative arguments which they used to have with the unbelievers that are recorded in the Gracious Qur'an; likewise, discussions they had with the believers and the detailed ways of life narrated from .them

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ٣, p. ٣٣٣, hadith ٢۵ -١

we delve deeply in the discussions the prophets ('a) had with the polytheists and the

defiant, we cannot find anything insulting, offensive or humiliating that they said to the infidels. Indeed, in spite of all the opposition, insults, mockery, derision and ridicule that the unbelievers used to heap upon them, they always responded with the best and most well-intentioned counsels and advice and always took their leave with .peace

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلاَمًا

The servants of the All-beneficent are those who walk humbly on the earth, and" (when the ignorant address them, say, 'Peace!'"(١

In spite of all the hurtful words, false accusations and derisions which the polytheists would utter to the prophets ('a), and the Qur'an has narrated them, it has not been recorded anywhere that the prophets ('a) ever responded in kind. On the contrary, .they used to respond with decent talk, articulate logic and good manners

Truly, these great people conformed to the method of education that taught them the best manner of speech and behavior and of these teachings is the following, which :Allah, the Exalted, ordered upon Moses and Aaron

اذْهَبَا إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى * فَقُولاَ لَهُ قَوْلاً لَيِّنًا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى

Let the two of you go to Pharaoh. Indeed he has rebelled. Speak to him in a soft" (manner; maybe he will take admonition or fear."(٢

One of the manners of speech of the prophets ('a) is that they always considered themselves as part and parcel of

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١- Surat al-Furqan ٢٥:٦٣.

٢- Surat Ta Ha ٢٠:٤٣-٤٤.

the people and used to talk with everyone according to their own level of understanding, and this truth can be deduced from the conversations which they had

with different people as has been recorded in history. A hadith has been narrated by :both the Shi'ahs and Sunnis that the Noble Prophet (S) stated

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The basis of our work as prophets is to talk to people according to their intellects

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Abstaining from Talkativeness and Excess in Humor and Joking

Our discussion concerns the defects and detriments of the tongue and there are numerous hadiths recorded in this regard. Religious jurisprudents have assigned certain topics of Islamic jurisprudence [fiqh] to the inviolable things [muharramat] in regard to speech, including lies, gossiping, ridicule, tormenting a believer, as well as vain and extravagant talk which has become known as lahw al-hadith—talk which separates man from Allah and diminishes the spirituality and divine light of human .(nature (in books of ethics there are detailed discussions explaining this matter

The thing is that in some instances, the condemnation and unlawfulness of certain deeds is clear to man; therefore, man harbors no doubts with regard to their religious decrees in speech and deeds. However, sometimes certain words appear to be permissible and man even imagines that they are advisable when they are in reality forbidden or unadvisable. In such circumstances, the devil deceives us and we fall into error, whether knowingly or unknowingly, and as a result say those dubious and erroneous words. Sometimes, also man himself lacks enough attention and deceives .himself

If man reflects upon doubtful things

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ١, p. ٨٥, hadith ٧ -١

in regard to what is good, he usually perceives the truth of the matter, but he unfortunately does not often pay careful attention to these things because he acts out of whims and does not take care in his deeds. He even makes excuses for himself .and even calls his deeds good and justifies them as well

For example, a joking jester who wants to liven up a gathering and make other people laugh makes excuses for himself that tonight is a festival and he only intends to make people happy! On this pretext he embarks upon frivolous talk which has no spiritual or worldly benefits whatsoever, and does not have any other effects save wasting time .and even hurting other people

The word 'lahw' (frivolousness) denotes everything which prevents man from important and necessary work and 'lahw al-hadith' (vain and frivolous talk) is vain and extravagant talk which causes man to deviate from what is right and makes him preoccupied—like old superstitious tales and stories which tempt man to do indecent .and obscene deeds—melodies and music can also be instances of lahw al-hadith

:The Qur'an states

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا نَبْتَغِي الْجَاهِلِينَ

And when they hear vain talk, they avoid it and say, 'Our deeds belong to us, and" (your deeds belong to you. Peace be upon you, we do not court the ignorant'."(١

It has been recorded in "Majma' al-Bayan" that this verse was revealed in regard to Nasr ibn Harith. He was

.Surat Qasas ٢٨:٥٥ -١

a businessman who used to travel to Iran where he would learn the old tales of the Iranians and later relate them to the Quraysh. He used to say, "Muhammad narrates

to you stories about 'Ad and Thamud and I narrate to you stories about Rostam, Esfandiyar and Kasra." The people too would listen to his tales and not to the verses .of the Qur'an

We have to bear in mind that it is not only vain and comical talk which makes an unhappy believer cheerful, but also relation of a suitable hadith with the temperament of the heavy-hearted believer about the graces of Allah can thus cheer him or her up and release them from sorrow and sadness. We do not necessarily have to make a .person happy by means of vain or comical talk

There is no person who denies the goodness of making other people happy and joyous, and this is a point which has repeatedly been recommended in Islamic sources. However, the point here is that a person's words and speech should have positive value and spiritual worthiness so as not to waste other people's time and not .lose Allah's graces, one of which is the tongue itself, in vain and unrewarding pursuits

:Imam al-Baqir ('a) narrates that the Noble Prophet (S) stated

Every person who makes a believer happy and joyous has made me happy and" (joyous and verily every person who makes me happy has made Allah happy."(١

In another hadith Imam al-Sajjad ('a) narrates that the Noble

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ٣, p. ٢٧١ -١

:Prophet (S) stated

The best of deeds in the eyes of Allah, the Exalted and Honorable, is making the" (believers happy."(١

Sometimes, a believer becomes sad because of worldly affairs and sometimes on account of matters related to the hereafter. In any case, that sorrow and sadness inhibits man from activities and work and brings his faculties and powers to a halt.

Therefore, he cannot make use of his capabilities and capacities because he has no peace of mind and lacks joy. If he studies, nothing is retained in his memory, and he .lacks presence of heart during prayer

In any case, he cannot concentrate on anything and he does not embark on doing anything. In this case, we have to try to redeem him from that sorrow and sadness and gladden him so that he may perform his acts of worship and other duties. Making him happy is both desirable and an act of worship if done with the intention to please .Allah

Sometimes, man deceives himself that the only way to make a believer happy and joyous is to narrate useless tales, speak vain and futile words and tell funny jokes to him forgetting that in that regard he can speak productive, logical and valuable words and he can bring the believer out of sorrow and sadness by means of reasonable talk. He can guide the believer and tell him that these sorrows and distresses do not remedy problems and only harm the brain and inhibit him from his work without

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.Ibid., p. ۲۷۲ -۱

.benefiting him in any way

A joker or jester starts telling funny jokes once he sees his friend sad, imagining that he will make his friend happy, negligent of the fact that only a bit of joking is advisable and excessive jesting is reproachable and blameworthy. Excessive jokes cause man not to take himself and other people seriously and to imagine that everything is for play and sport. Also, a lot of laughing gives rise to the spiritual death of the heart and blots out the seriousness and sombreness' of man. We notice that even the Noble :Prophet (S) used to joke, as he himself stated

(I too joke, but I joke about what is right."(۱"

:And in regard to the need to refrain from excessive laughter, he states

I swear upon Allah, if you were aware of what I know, you would cry more and laugh“ less.”(۲)

With regard to what has been mentioned, we have to try not to let joking and jesting go beyond advisable limits. Most often excessive jokes and funny stories made on the pretext of making people happy result in hurting, derision and, Allah forbid, false accusation and gossip about other human beings. Man is cheated and deceived by the devil that making a believer happy is a recommendable act and thereby perpetrates a sin like gossip. In addition to the fact that he himself becomes contaminated by sin by committing indecent deeds, he impels his friend to become tainted by sin by listening to gossip.

In any case, in

۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۶, p. ۲۹۸.

۲- Ibid., vol. ۵۸, p. ۱۰۷.

a great number of situations the devil deceives man into committing sin as a result of vainly imagining that he is doing good and decent deeds. However, if man thinks well and uses caution, he conceives his mistake.

Sometimes though, a person does not perceive his mistakes no matter how carefully he thinks because a human being is not necessarily perspicacious and foresighted. In such circumstances, it is the duty of others to make him aware that his deeds are not appropriate and he can do better deeds to make believers happy in another form that is more appropriate and desirable.

The Diversity in Methods of Guidance

In order to make people aware of their displeasing acts, we cannot always derive benefit from the same methods. For people that do not have much knowledge about incumbent and forbidden things of religion and are not knowledgeable of religious sources such as the Qur’an and hadith, the worldly and heavenly ill-effects of sins

such as gossip, lying and false accusation must be enumerated. They have to understand that gossip is similar to eating the meat of a dead brother, and other .facts

However, for people who are always preoccupied with the Book and the sunnah and sciences of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), there is no need to enumerate the ill-effects of these sins because they themselves are aware of them. However, they do have to be reminded about instances in regard to which they have become negligent. They have to be awakened and made aware that some talk, even

if it is done with a good intention, is unadvisable and not pleasing to Allah and can .result in harm

Indeed, in some instances, deeds are two-sided or ambivalent and it is a person's intention and motive which grants them the essence of decency or indecency. Sometimes, a deed is considered to be good if it is done with a good intention although the same deed can be considered to be a bad deed if it is done with a bad .intention because the value of every deed in the Islamic point of view is the intention

Often a person, unknowingly or out of negligence, does a bad deed with good intentions and in this regard he receives a reward due to his good intention or at least if he is not rewarded he is exempt from punishment. On the other hand, if he carries out a good deed with a ignoble intention, he does not gain any reward and he has not performed any worship and would most probably be punished for that act because his deed was not done out of good intentions. Such instances can be found in a lot of .sayings

Sometimes, discussion arises in a group in regard to a certain person and someone from the group intends to talk about the good traits of that individual and, in order to please that individual, he embarks upon flattering and improperly complimenting that person. If the others ask why the person is flattering so and so, he responds

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.that he intends to be endowed with humility as a result of praising other people

Of course, one of the excellent qualities of man is that he should enumerate the good qualities of other human beings and try to mention the virtues of other people—this point has been recommended in the hadiths. By doing so, we increase the repute and prestige of a believer and we also encourage others to do good deeds and acquire good traits, but we have to observe the intention we employ when we praise other people. Is our praise for the sake of honoring a believer, pleasing Allah and bidding the good in the society or do we praise others in their presence and absence so as to ?earn their pleasure and subsequent favors

If we compliment a person with the intention of earning his pleasure and favors, he may praise us in return and grant us favors in times of our need. In such circumstances, we have done nothing but become deceived by the devil—we have praised our friend in his absence so that he may praise us in our absence. It is in these .circumstances that knowledgeable and informed people are deceived by the devil

The devil impels ordinary and unlearned people who are not aware about divine injunctions and laws to tell lies and gossip openly and commit well-known and defined sins, but he deceives the scholars in another form. He makes them imagine that if ,they embark upon reciprocal praise of one another

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they have done something good. This in reality is the result of the trickeries and .deceptions of the carnal soul

Therefore, man has to be cautious and examine his heart whenever he wants to do any deed in order to see what motive he has for doing that action. He has to reflect a bit before doing anything and again after doing it. He should not let his tongue loose and free to utter whatever he wishes without any reflection and thought, because this .is a quality of fools who do not control their tongues and say whatever they desire

:In regard to the difference between a wise and foolish person, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states

The tongue of the wise man is behind his heart, and the heart of the fool is behind his“ (tongue.”(1

:In explanation of this prominent saying, the late Sayyid Radi states

This is one of the most prominent and honorable sayings, and the intention of Imam“ ‘Ali (‘a) is that the wise do not leave their tongues free to speak before they reflect and meditate in their hearts. In contrast, the ignorant gives precedence to saying whatever he wishes before thinking and contemplating. Therefore, it is as though the tongue of a wise man is behind his heart and the heart of an ignorant man is behind ”.his tongue

Therefore, it is befitting that when talking, we have to initially ponder about why we want to talk and what our motive is so that by the grace of Allah, we may

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۱- Nahj al-Balaghah, p, ۳۶۷, pithy aphorisms ۴۰, trans. Shahidi.

remain safe from the defects of the tongue, the deceptions of the carnal soul and the devil. However, if we do not think or take precaution in our deeds and we talk without reflecting and calculating, we will gradually fall into the devil’s traps and unwillingly fall .prey to his deceptions and trickery

Of course, these errors which result from negligence, haste, lack of thought and reflection and not having the correct intention in doing deeds are not confined to words and speech. Man also falls into these errors with regard to deriving benefit from the other parts and limbs of the body but at present our discussion concerns the defects and faults which arise from the tongue and are directed at man and surely the deviations and errors of the tongue are numerous and the dangers which arise from the tongue are more than those which result from the other parts of the body. We must remember to seek the pleasure of Allah when we speak, and not our own low

.and defiled motives

In the first place, our speech must be pleasing to Allah and, in the second place, we have to have the right incentive when speaking; that is to say, there has to be both virtue in the deed and virtue in the doer. Both the mould and the framework of our talk must be correct and the contents and the aim of that talk have to be correct. In other words, the form as well as the

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.meaning and purport have to be right

Many times over Imam Khomeini, may Allah be pleased with him, and other eminent scholars used to say: never does the devil tempt a religious scholar to liquor drinking or any ugly deed which is unsuitable to his status because in that case no repute remains for that religious scholar and he is never prepared to tolerate such danger and loss for himself. However, the devil compels religious scholars and the people of knowledge to deviations and slips which in their inner essence are even worse than .beer drinking

He obliges the scholar to do deeds which do not have an ugly outward appearance and no one reproaches him for doing that, but the damage and sin of that deed is great and most often man himself does not even conceive the greatness of the sin he !has committed and to what level he has [spiritually] fallen

For this reason, there is need to be cautious and embark upon controlling carnal desires and restraining our tongues so that we do not utter whatever word we desire and we must observe limits in our talk. We must not talk when there is no need to .speak

A Perspective on the Effects of Speech and Other Deeds

We have to bear in mind that once we get engrossed in talking, controlling the tongue becomes difficult. For this reason, we have to reflect about what we want to say before talking so as not to go beyond limits. If we do not control our tongues, when

talk about

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a particular subject arises in a gathering and others laugh as a result and thus .encourage more, it is very hard for a person to stop

Therefore, he jokes and jests in his frivolous talk and tries in every way, even by means of gossip, to make the others laugh. In reality, an uncontrolled tongue is like an unruly horse which is very difficult to control once its reins have been released. For this reason, people have to try to first control their tongues and ponder upon every sentence that they want to say. They must reflect upon whether what they want to .say is proper or improper and refrain from excessiveness and extremism

The Noble Prophet (S) and the saints [awliya'] of Allah ('a), in order to edify and train people, used to warn them to be accountable for their deeds and not imagine that they would not have to answer for them. We must not imagine that nothing at all has !taken place one hour after talking about whatever we fancy

On the contrary, every word that is released from our mouths is recorded, and every person will be held accountable as to why he says what he says and why he had a particular intention. Paying heed to this issue helps a person control his tongue; .otherwise, the carnal soul is strong and does not easily surrender

One of the ways by which the soul of a believer can be controlled is by making it realize that Allah, the

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Exalted, is present everywhere, He listens to whatever we say and He will question every one of us in regard to what we have said. The Noble Prophet (S) has explained :this in this way

O Abu Dharr! Allah, the Honored and Glorified, is next to the tongue of every speaker." ".Therefore, the speaker has to fear Allah and be cautious about what he says

If man pays heed to the fact that Allah is present whenever he talks and his words do not remain hidden from Allah, he becomes cautious and does not utter anything he wishes. In addition to that, piety brings about fear of Allah, helps man control his .conduct and does not allow his tongue to produce words without great caution

Likewise, one of the ways the saints [awliya'] of Allah ('a) would employ to train their followers was to control their carnal desires through careful attentiveness to their surroundings and in this way encourage their followers to refrain from excessive or .out of place talk so that they talk only according to need and necessity

They used to encourage them to speak less and if they could let the listener know what they meant in two sentences, they should refrain from speaking a third sentence. Even if they wanted to explain an incumbent duty, such as 'enjoining good and forbidding evil' [amr bi'l-ma'ruf wa nahy 'an al-munkar], they should try to speak just enough to fulfill this aim and refrain from additional words; in this regard, the Noble

:Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Refrain from speaking unnecessary words. It is sufficient that you' ".speak only to fulfill your goal

Sometimes when a person is busy talking in a gathering, he utters superfluous or pointless words without attention—words which have no benefit either for this world or for the hereafter. He loses the irreplaceable capital of his life! Therefore, it is necessary for man to speak according to need and abstain from useless or :superfluous words. In one hadith the Noble Prophet (S) states

Blessed is he whose morals are good, whose attributes are pure, whose inner self is" decent, whose appearance is good, who spends his extra wealth in the way of Allah (and who swallows his extra words."(۱

One eminent religious scholar says, "A believer is a person who first reflects before

talking, and he speaks if he determines it to be advisable; otherwise, he keeps silent. ".However, the immoral and perverted one sets his tongue at complete liberty

Indeed, excess in speech is one of the defects of the tongue which lowers the personality and social status of man and can become a cause of regret for him in the hereafter because once a person speaks without any control, whether he likes it or not, in addition to wasting time in talkativeness and vanity, he also commits sins of the tongue; therefore, he has wasted both the great capital of time and invited the wrath .and anger of Allah

The Need to Relate True Speech and Abstain from Spreading Rumors and Hearsay

:In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states

"O Abu Dharr! In order to

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۶۹, p. ۴۰۰ -۱

".lie, it is sufficient for a person to narrate whatever he hears

One of the flaws of the tongue is that it should instantly narrate whatever it hears without investigation and research in regard to its correctness. Even if a person has no intention of telling a lie and only narrates what he hears without any additions or subtractions, his speech is nonetheless considered to be a lie because he has no certainty that what he says is correct or incorrect. For this reason, we have to refrain from outright intentional lies, because they are offensive, and also abstain from .saying things we do not have certainty about

We have to first of all inquire about what we hear and then only relate it once we are .sure about its truthfulness

The Noble Prophet (S) states that if a person narrates everything he hears, he will be considered a liar. In addition, sometimes we are not cautious in relating what we hear

and often add or subtract to what we have heard when relating it to other people. We must be cautious not to recount everything we have heard when we talk because everything should not be repeated, and even worse is that we exaggerate and !embellish what we hear when recounting it to the others

With regard to the purport of falsehood which the Noble Prophet (S) has presented, spreading rumors and gossip is beyond the shadow of doubt a clear manifestation of lying. Gossip has been one of the weapons of the

p: ۱۶۵

.devil's forces against the leaders of religion

Whenever they rose up to guide mankind and to establish a sound and divine society, the enemies of Allah's religion would stand up against them with all the satanic means including lies, gossip and false accusation in order to disperse the people from the reformers and the divine leaders and consequently attain their evil objectives and .gains

By carefully studying history, we realize that in the early days of Islam too the enemies, in order to restrain the Muslims from supporting the Noble Prophet (S) and frustrate their endurance in the way of religion, used to make use of false rumors and gossip with the intention of creating fear and anxiety in their hearts. In this regard :Allah, the Exalted, states

وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِن الأَمْنِ أَو الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُوْلِي الأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ...

When a report of safety or alarm comes to them, they immediately broadcast it, but" had they referred it to the Apostle or to those vested with authority among them, (those of them who investigate would have ascertained it..."(۱

This blessed verse narrates the story of the minor [sughra] battle of Badr in which, after the war of Uhud and the insubordination of the Muslims to the Prophet's (S) orders, the Muslims were losing the battle and consequently Allah aided the Noble Prophet (S) so much so that he triumphed over the polytheists in spite of having very

few forces. Islam was saved from

p: ۱۶۶

.Surat al-Nisa' ۴:۸۳ -۱

.definite extermination

The hypocrites, by enumerating the capacities of the enemy and recounting their victory at the battle of Uhud, wanted to incite doubts and uncertainty in the hearts of the Muslims and the companions of the Noble Prophet (S) and mislead the believers by means of their rumor mongering. Their aim was nothing but opposition with the .(Noble Prophet (S

It can be understood from this verse that when a report of safety or alarm comes to them, they immediately broadcast it that the hypocrites used to propagate fear and the Muslims would spread their rumors. It was nothing but nonsense which was being created by the infidels and their accomplices in order to create division and hypocrisy among the believers, but the people of weak faith used to spread those false rumors and did not understand that spreading such rumors would result in weakness and .vulnerability among the Muslims

After the Muslims sustained losses during the battle of Uhud, the Noble Prophet (S) constantly used to invite the people to take part in jihad against the infidels but some people were working to prevent the believers from jihad and from helping the Noble Prophet (S) and so they were spreading false rumors that the infidels had gathered very large forces and great armies; Allah warned them that all the false rumors and frightening of the Muslims were the work of the devil and the talk of Satan which was being produced on the tongues of his friends. After that Allah

p: ۱۶۷

made it incumbent upon the believers not to fear such machinations and only to fear (Allah, the Exalted, if they had faith in Him.(۱

In today’s world and especially in revolutionary countries and particularly in our country which has stood alone against all the hegemonic powers and is trying to protect its independence and guard Islamic and revolutionary values with all its being, there is a lot of rumor mongering and word-of-mouth relation of false stories. In order to create a split in the unity of the people and to make them pessimistic in regard to the goals and advances of the revolution, the hypocrites and .counterrevolutionaries create and spread false rumors

Unfortunately, once ignorant people hear these false rumors, they recount them with various motives. Perhaps they may not even have bad intentions in recounting those rumors, but when they sit next to their friends after long conversations, they have in .any case narrated a number of false rumors

Even if a person does not have any bad motives in narrating rumors, he has to observe whether recounting them has any benefit or not; in addition, he has to reflect as to whether that rumor has any basis or not. One should accept that it is likely that the person that has narrated that story is mistaken or that someone else has fed him .with lies and false stories

Therefore, before narrating any news, we have to carefully inquire whether it is right or not and speak with such caution and

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.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۵, p. ۱۸, third ed., Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah Publications -۱

thought that once someone else hears our words, he becomes certain of its truth and says that there is no doubt in the words of so and so and whatever he says is true and .he never speaks without deliberation

A person should speak correctly and with deliberation so as to win the confidence of others and attain a high and prominent reputation in the society as a result of telling the truth. If a person aims at attaining a good reputation, he has to try to earn the people’s trust and confidence such that the people are impelled to say that so and so

.does not talk without contemplation and his words are correct and truthful

Such a position grants him both worldly and heavenly reward. In the worldly point of view, the benefits of honesty and telling the truth are clear and in the heavenly point of view it results in the pleasure of Allah and man being granted lofty positions in .heaven

Therefore, we should not relate whatever we hear on the slightest pretext. If we disregard narrations that people often make about what they hear, in which they add or subtract something from it making uncalled-for changes, it is not even acceptable to explain every correct and true topic. Often it is not in a person's best interests to narrate what is right, because we might put the repute of a believer in danger and this is forbidden [haram] and a cause of Allah's wrath. In addition to

that, some rumors cause people of weak faith to lose hope and become pessimistic .about the Islamic system or the authorities

Therefore, we have to bear in mind some of the expediencies when narrating some stories. We have to observe whether recounting some news has benefits or not. One must ask whether the listener has the capacity to bear and take in the news or not. Furthermore, one must ask whether he will take caution when narrating news to other people. Does he recount news without additions and subtractions or does he add to it much more than that which is true and narrate it to every person and as a result of spreading that news the system weakens and the people's confidence and ?trust in the system and the leaders lessens

:In continuation of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) sates

".O Abu Dharr! There is nothing more worthy of being imprisoned than the tongue"

This is another instructional explanation from the Noble Prophet (S) which compels man to be more cautious of his words and to try to imprison the tongue in order not to utter words without deliberation. Some of the scholars of ethics used to state that

Allah, the Exalted, has placed teeth in front of the tongue and he has placed lips in front of the teeth in order to imprison the tongue behind them.

Lesson ۳۲: The Manifestations of Venerating and Glorifying Allah

point

"O Abu Dharr! Venerating and honoring Allah the Blessed and High denotes revering elderly Muslims, respecting the bearers of the Qur'an and

those who fulfill its teachings and holding the just ruler in high esteem. O Abu Dharr! Every person that is bad-tempered is continuously becoming farther from Allah."

In this section of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) reminds us that honoring some of the servants of Allah is tantamount to venerating Allah. On the basis of their rational aptitude and to achieve certain goals, the wise sometimes liken something to something else or a certain action to another deed or they introduce an individual as similar to some other human being; in the same way that it is also said in conventional conversation that this deed is similar to that deed or that this person is like that other human being. This act of likening and juxtaposing is based on the similarity as well as joint aspect which exists between 'the subject of comparison' [mishabbah] and 'the object of comparison' [mushabbah bih].

The reason for this comparison and likening is that qualities and characteristics in one individual and/or deed may be concealed and covered up while that same attribute and feature may be apparent in the other individual and/or deed and, in order for that concealed and covered up quality to be recognized or distinguished as well as for the attention of other people to become concentrated upon it, it is introduced as similar to another thing and/or individual which has a more obvious feature and attribute.

In conventional metaphors we see that a brave human being is likened to a lion,

regardless that the level of bravery which is found in a lion is not found in man, but they liken that man to a lion for the reason that the lion is well-known for its courage. They do so with the intention of making that individual's concealed bravery known so that his courage will become completely apparent for other people and so that people's attention will be concentrated on him. This very attraction and concentration .of people's attention on him can have its own objectives and goals

In the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths we come across a lot of expressions where individuals have been introduced as similar to Allah, the Exalted, and/or a deed which is done for people has been presented as a work done for Allah. For example, :giving a loan to the needy has been likened to giving a loan to Allah

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِی يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ وَلَهُ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ

Who is it that will lend Allah a good loan, that He may multiply it for him and [that]" (there may be a noble reward for him?"(١)

This likening is done in spite of the fact that Allah, the Exalted, not only has infinite perfection, but, according to the accurate expression of some of the prominent religious scholars, has super-infinite perfection. A person who knows Allah and has faith in Him understands that Allah, the Exalted, has all the perfections in the highest .imaginable form

(The Uncomprehended Status of the Prophet (S) and the Pure Imams ('a

Not taking Allah, the Exalted, into account, there are

.Surat al-Hadid ٥٧:١١ -١

amongst created beings those having completion although this completion is limited; however, at times some of these perfections and their standards are disguised and .not completely understood by other people

Examples are the greatest and most perfect of human beings and creatures of Allah, namely the Fourteen Infallibles (‘a), whose worthy prominence and extent of perfection is not completely known to others. It is for this reason that ordinary and common people perceive them as similar to other human beings.

Even some of the people who believe in the Noble Prophet (S) imagine that he was a person similar to other human beings, with the difference that he received divine inspiration, but they cannot conceive how much higher his standing and importance are to that of other human beings!

For people who know the loftiness of the Noble Prophet’s (S) status, there remains no doubt that of all the prophets (‘a) of Allah, he is the most superior, pre-eminent and perfect Prophet (S) and the divine legal code is his. Allah, the Exalted, raised him to the prophetic mission and inspired the Book to him so that he may judge on the basis of justice and equity and rise up upon the order of Allah and guide mankind upon the right path.

By means of logic and words appropriate to the people’s intellect, he was charged with acquainting people with Allah, their interests in this world and the next, and completing their religion. In this regard, he presented manifest proof and demonstrative

p: ۱۷۳

reasoning and would talk to every person to the extent of their intellect and understanding. In order for the community to become aware of the truth, he used to provide logical proof and reason:

... لِيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ وَيَحْيَى مَنْ حَيَّ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ...

“So that he who perishes might perish by a manifest proof, and he who lives may live on by a manifest proof...”(1)

In regard to the status of the Noble Prophet (S), Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states:

Allah chose him from the family tree of prophets [the family of Abraham], from the" flame of light [the light of guidance and deliverance], from the forehead of greatness [from a family distinguished above others], from the land of al-Batha' [a noble and respected place], from the lamps for darkness [the ancestors of the Prophet were all like lamps of guidance for the lost] and from the sources of wisdom [the members of this family were believers and holders of the Book and others learned wisdom from (them]."(٢

:Elsewhere, Imam 'Ali ('a) states

His place of stay is the best of all places and his origin is the noblest of all origins in" the depositories of honor and the sanctuaries of safety. Hearts of the virtuous are captivated by him and the gazes are fixed upon him. Through him Allah buried mutual rancor, put out the flames of revolt, gave them affection like brothers and brought separation among some [like Hamzah and Abu Lahab]. Through his prophethood, He transformed the lowliness and suffering of

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.Surat al-Anfal ٨:۴٢ -١

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ٣٢١, sermon [khutbah] ١٠٧, trans. Fayd al-Islam -٢

the faithful to honor and eminence and degraded the infidels from greatness to (lowliness and misfortune."(١

On the basis of Allah's words and the sayings which have reached us from the Noble Prophet (S) and the Pure Imams ('a), we generally understand that those fourteen pure and divine lights have such high stations that even if all human beings were to put their intellects together, they would still not be able to comprehend their great .stations, let alone attain any one of them

This knowledge and awareness has been granted to us on account of the grace and favor of Allah and by the grace of the verses of the Gracious Qur'an and the hadiths. It is because the Noble Prophet (S) possesses that high position and superior level that

he is the best guide of Allah and after him also he has left two great heritages and legacies, the Book of Allah and his Pure Progeny ['itrah] ('a), and has advised his people to take refuge in them in order not to deviate. He, the Noble Prophet (S), :stated

I leave behind for you two precious items, the Book of Allah and my Ahl al-Bayt" (household). If you hold fast to them, you will never go astray and those two will never (be separated from each other until they meet me at the Pool [hawd] of Kawthar."(۲

The meaning of the two not being separated is that the Pure Progeny of the Noble) Prophet (S) will never ever do anything opposed to

p: ۱۷۵

.Ibid., p. ۲۸۳, sermon [khutbah] ۹۴ -۱

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲۳, p. ۱۳۳ -۲

(.the book of Allah due to their infallibility

The Relationship between Obedience to Allah and Obedience to the Prophet (S) and the (Ahl al-Bayt ('a

:One of the verses which introduces the high station of the Noble Prophet (S) is

مَنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ...

(Whoever obeys the Apostle certainly has obeyed Allah..."(۱"

In this verse there is no limit set for obeying the Noble Prophet (S), it is for this reason that we understand that if a person obeys the Noble Prophet (S), he has in fact obeyed Allah, the Exalted. This verse is considered to be one of the verses denoting the infallibility of the Noble Prophet (S) because it and other verses of this kind impel .us to obey the Noble Prophet (S) absolutely

It shows that he does not order us to do anything that is opposed to the orders and wishes of Allah; otherwise, if Allah were to order us to obey Him on the one hand and

then on the other hand order us to obey someone that tells us to oppose His own orders, contradiction would arise.

This same highness and superiority which has been proven for the Noble Prophet (S) has also been ascertained for the Infallible Imams (‘a) and it is because of their station and status that Allah, the Exalted, has allotted them the title ‘those vested with authority’ [uli’l-amr]:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُوْلِى الأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ...

“O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you...”(۲)

Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah Ansari says, “After this verse was inspired upon the

p: ۱۷۶

۱- Surat al-Nisa’ ۴:۸۰.

۲- Surat al-Nisa’ ۴:۵۹.

Noble Prophet (S), I asked the Noble Prophet, ‘O Prophet of Allah! We know Allah and His Prophet (S), but who are those vested with authority whose obedience Allah has mentioned next to His own obedience?’”

In response, the Noble Prophet (S) said:

“O Jabir! Those are my successors and the leaders of the Muslims after me.”

Then, the Noble Prophet (S) enumerated every one of the Imams (‘a) by name until he came to the name of the Twelfth Imam, may Allah hasten his reappearance; then, he stated:

“The twelfth of them has both my name and my pseudonym. He is the proof of Allah on the earth, His remaining one and mercy among His servants, and the son of al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali. He is the very person through whom Allah, the Exalted, will conquer the East and the West.”(۱)

The similitude of obedience to the Noble Prophet (S) and obedience to Allah also exists in relation to obedience to the Pure Imams ('a) and Fatimah al-Zahra' ('a), because in the same way that the Noble Prophet (S) has the highest possible perfection a .creature can ever have, they too have the same perfection

In order to better conceive this similitude of obedience to Allah and obedience to the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt ('a), it is befitting to reflect a bit on the supplication of Ziyarat Jami'ah al-Kabirah in order to understand what has been stated in regard to their lofty station and the need to obey and follow them. In this supplication

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲۶, p. ۲۵۰ -۱

:we read

Whoever has obeyed you has in fact obeyed Allah and whoever has disobeyed you" has in fact disobeyed Allah and whoever has loved you has indeed loved Allah and whoever has enmity and hatred towards you truly has enmity and hatred towards "...Allah

This purport has been recorded in a more complete manner in the supplication of the :days of the month of Rajab

O Allah! I request from you all that which those vested with your authority request" ".from you

:Elsewhere, it states

There is no difference between You and them except that they are your servants" ".and creatures

The exemplification of divine perfection is within them but the difference lies in the fact that their perfections emanate from Allah and Allah has attached these perfections to them and of course this difference is more than infinite—even though

the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt ('a) have all the perfections and superiorities, still those perfections originally emanate from Allah and they are not anything in and of themselves.

When they are compared with other creatures though, all creatures are in need of them and not only is no one equal with them, there is an utmost difference and contrast between them and others; however, when they are compared with Allah, the Exalted, we notice that there is no correlation between them and Allah because they are absolutely in need and Allah is the Absolute Self-sufficient for the reason that whatever every individual has emanates from Allah.

Even so, comparing the station of the Noble Prophet

(S) and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) with that of Allah is completely proper and we are incapable of comprehending their positions and obedience to them is tantamount to obedience to Allah, love of them is tantamount to love of Allah and enmity and disobedience to them is tantamount to enmity and disobedience to Allah.

In regard to the rank of Fatimah al-Zahra' ('a), the Noble Prophet (S) has said:

"Fatimah is a part of me; whoever gladdens her has gladdened me and whoever saddens her has saddened me. Fatimah is the most beloved person to me."(١)

It has been said that the stations of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) have been introduced as similar to the eminence of Allah, just as some of the actions that are done in connection with some people have been introduced as similar to the deeds which are done in connection with another being. In the same way, remembering and invoking the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt ('a) has been introduced as remembering and invoking Allah. Allah, the Exalted, states in the Qur'an:

فَاذْكُرُونِى أَذْكُرْكُمْ ...

"Remember Me, and I will remember you."(٢)

There is no doubt that Allah, the Exalted, remembers all creatures and He is not negligent of anything or person, but the purport of remembering in the blessed verse is attentive and present remembrance as well as existence of grace and reward. If an individual wants Allah to remember him and not to omit the granting of His blessings, .he must remember Him

p: ۱۷۹

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۴۳, p. ۲۳ -۱

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۵۲ -۲

We observe in the hadiths that remembrance of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) has been :compared with remembrance of Allah. Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states

Remembrance of us is remembrance of Allah and remembrance of our enemy is" (remembrance of the devil."(۱

Comparing remembrance of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) with remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, is for the reason that they are the proxies of Allah and they do not conceive for themselves a station and rank other than servitude of Allah. When one brings to mind the name of the Noble Prophet (S) or an imam, does anything other than their being representatives of Allah occur to the mind? Because it does not, hearing their names concentrates one's attention on Allah—that is why remembrance of them is .remembrance of Allah

In exemplifying the station and sovereignty of Allah, the Exalted, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and the Noble Prophet (S) occupy a high level and they are perfect examples and in every aspect are the complete mirrors and exponents of the Almighty. There is no doubt that a mirror does not show off anything of itself and is only a means for showing the face which looks into the mirror to be seen with clarity. The Noble Prophet (S) and the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt ('a) too do not emanate anything .from themselves and whatever they have is from Allah and they manifest Him well

In view of the fact that the Pure Imams ('a) are the perfect mirrors of Allah, the

Exalted, and they

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۵, p. ۴۶۸ -۱

are absorbed in the Divine Beauty, to the extent that they manifest the Attributes of Allah, the Exalted, with all their being, Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) stated while pointing at his :home

Every kind of knowledge that does not come out of this house is null and void.” Then“ he also stated to one of his companions, “If you are in pursuit of correct knowledge, acquire it from the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a). Verily, we have explained every kind of knowledge and interpreted all kinds of wisdom concealed in the divine verses. The knowledge of equitable judgment and arbitration has been entrusted to us. Allah chose us and has)not given to anyone that which He has given to us.”(۱

The Need to Respect and Honor the Believers

point

If we consider those who are humble, whoever is more similar to them, that is to say, whoever is more unwavering in servitude of Allah and has distanced himself from egotism and the spirit of narcissism in his worship of Allah, the Exalted—in short, to whatever extent a man rids himself of egotism and becomes a servant of Allah and stops conceiving himself as independent, he acquires the merit of being similar to :Allah. In regard to visiting the believer, Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) states

To whoever visits his believing brother for the sake of Allah, Allah, the Exalted, has“ stated, ‘You have visited Me, your reward is with Me and I will not be pleased with)granting you a reward less than paradise’.”(۲

It has been recorded in a hadith that if a believer visits a

1- Ibid., vol. 26, p. 158.
2- Ibid., vol. 74, p. 345.

believing brother for the pleasure of Allah and without having any other intention and earthly demand, Allah, the Exalted, sends an angel to ask him, "Why have you come here and what is your intention?" That believer responds, "I have come to the house of one of Allah's slaves and my brother in faith so as to meet and see him."

The angel again asks, "Have you placed any trust in his hands and you have any demands on him?" He replies, "No." The angel further asks, "What then do you have to do with him and why have you come here?" That believer responds again, "I love him for the sake of Allah and that is why I have come to visit him." Finally, that angel gives him a message from Allah that, "O my servant! You have come to see Me and you are My guest and your reception is my responsibility."

Indeed, once a believer has made up his mind to be devoted to Allah and eliminate his egoism and self-worship, he attains a station that visiting him becomes tantamount to visiting Allah. By means of closely observing and examining the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths, we find a lot of varying themes in which visiting a believer and respecting him has been introduced as visiting and respecting Allah, the Exalted.

One of those instances is this very hadith in which the Noble Prophet (S), with the intention of advising and guiding Abu Dharr, has mentioned

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respecting three kinds of the servants of Allah as tantamount to respecting Allah. We have to realize that if it were possible (Allah save us) for man to see Allah and thus revere Him, he would have attained great status. Of course, as devoted servants of Allah, we have to see Allah with the eyes of the heart, and then worship Him. As Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"I have never worshipped a God whom I have not seen."(1)

At the time of devotion and worship of Allah, sometimes a man who sincerely

worships attains the position of venerating and honoring Allah. This level can also be achieved by a person who respects three groups of Allah's servants:

a) Honoring Elderly Muslims

The first group of people are the elderly who have spent their lives faithfully committed to Islam as well as its lofty divine laws and their beards have turned white upon the course of the religion. Respecting and having a high regard for this group of people is tantamount to venerating Allah. For this reason, if we see an elderly Muslim and respect him on account of his being a Muslim and his having lived his life on the path of Islam, we have respected Allah.

It is necessary that we understand what qualities this group of faithful servants and the worthy of Allah have that they have attained this nobility that respecting them is tantamount to venerating Allah.

Perhaps in respect to an elderly Muslim whose beard is white, an example has been made of him

p: ۱۸۳

۱- Ibid., vol. ۴, p. ۲۷.

because when a person looks at him, he sees a lifetime of servitude and devotion to Allah in his face. His luminous face and white beard, especially when the effects of prostration are also apparent on his forehead, are all indicative of a lifetime of devotion and servitude to Allah:

... سِيمَاهُمْ فِى وُجُوهِهِمْ مِنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ...

"...Their marks are [visible] on their faces because of the effect of prostration..."(۱)

Seeing one lifetime of devotion to Allah is seeing one divine lifetime because servitude and divinity are correlated; that is to say, when we see a devoted servant who has spent a lifetime worshiping Allah, we also see a divine life, wise conduct, guidance and

leadership. It is for this reason that it has been said that servitude and lordship are two correlated concepts, like other correlated notions such as father and son, such that once one sees a man from the aspect of fatherhood, he obviously thinks about .the son as well

In the same way, once you look at a man from the aspect of his being a son, without doubt you think about his father. When man observes one lifetime of the devotion of a sincere servant of Allah, he thinks about one lifetime of praying to Allah and this is that same relationship and connection that exists between divine lordship and divine servitude. It is for this reason that such a comparison is proper that it should be said ;that when you respect him, you have respected Allah

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.Surat al-Fath ۴۸:۲۹ -۱

.as if, within his own limits, he manifests divine lordship on his face

The criterion for comparison is the existence of a joint aspect. Now, what joint aspect is better than that one should manifest the other like a picture which reminds the first of the one in the picture? An elderly Muslim embodies a lifetime of devotional service and worship in his face and when you look at the effects of servitude on his face, you also see Allah's lordship. Therefore, on account of what has been mentioned, in Islam .respect towards the elderly is invaluable

There is need to point out that some of the values that are valid and reputable in Islamic societies are also respected and valid in non-Islamic societies, but the criteria are different. Respect of the elderly is a value which is more or less prevalent in all societies, but it is considered a custom and manner in societies which do not have an .Islamic and divine point of view

For this reason, they do not have correct and stable criteria for respecting the elderly. In the Islamic ethical order, values have logical criteria, strong roots as well as stable foundations although they are considered only worthy of respect in other societies.

The elderly are respected in all societies, but in Islamic societies an elderly person is a .manifestation of a lifetime of devotional service to Allah

This criterion is not recognized in other societies at all, however. Therefore, we should pay heed to this

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fact that if mention about certain values which are also respected in other ethical orders is made in the Qur'an and the hadiths, it does not mean that the value that is valid and recognized in Islam is that same value respected and recognized in other ethical orders nor that the criteria are the same; on the contrary, it is possible that the criteria are very different from the measure in the other ethical orders. Ethical criteria .of Islam are in fact quite superior and subtle

With regard to what has been said, we understand that we ought to hold the elderly in high esteem and every one younger must respect the one who is older because he is a devoted servant of Allah and he has lived more years than the younger one, but .respect to an elderly Muslim enjoys a special status and is similar to respecting Allah

In respect to the benefits, in the hereafter, of respecting the elderly, the Noble :Prophet (S) states

On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will grant safety to everyone who honors and" (respects the elder Muslims."(١

In regard to decent behavior with Muslims of different ages, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) :states

I advise you that the younger Muslims should conceive the middle aged as their elder" brothers, consider the elderly Muslims as their fathers, conduct yourselves with kindness towards the younger ones, be loyal to your brothers in Islam and be good to (your fathers in the faith."(٢

On account of Islam being a religion of love and

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷, p. ۲۰۲ -۱
.Murtada Farid, Al-Hadith, vol. ۱, p. ۳۰۶ -۲

affection, and being a religion which breeds affinity and kindness among its followers by inviting them to brotherhood and love and because it wants them, for the purpose of creating unity and eradicating hatred and anger, to preserve the shadow of Allah's mercy upon themselves by speaking kindly with one another, the Noble Prophet (S) :states

A person who respects his Muslim brother and removes his sorrow by means of" speaking kind words to him will forever remain in the shadow of Allah's mercy for as (long as this virtue and quality remains in him."(۱

Therefore, it is befitting of us to respect the elderly who have spent their lifetime on the course of Islam and their beards have become white in this way even if their levels of literacy are not the same as ours because we are not sure whether our ages will reach theirs or whether we will preserve our religion until the time we reach their .ages

There have been youths who were deprived of the gift of divine guidance in their middle ages and died in a state of disbelief and enmity with Allah. Truly, these elderly people who soundly preserved their religion during the entire course of their lives and guarded Islam within their beings merit great respect, even though they may lack a certain series of academic notions. This group of people had much grace that they were honored with the merit to be able to spend the courses of their lives on the path

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۶, p. ۸۴ -۱

!of Islam

b) Respecting the Teachers and Agents of the Qur'an

The second group is the scholars of the Qur'an and those who put it into practice. First and foremost, respect towards people who are both memorizers of the Qur'an and who act upon it is respect towards Allah and secondarily, respect towards people who are not memorizers but are both scholars of Qur'anic sciences and men of deeds is respect towards Allah. Likewise, a scholar is still worthy of a level of respect even if he is not a practitioner of the Qur'an but understand its sciences. It has been recorded in :a hadith that the Noble Prophet (S) stated

The nobles of my nation are the bearers of the Qur'an and those who keep vigil at" (night."(١

Special honor for the teachers of the Qur'an has been established in this hadith, but in this section of the hadith of Abu Dharr, besides mentioning nobility, it has been said that respect for these people is respect towards Allah; of course on the condition that they also act in accordance with the Qur'an. Characteristically, the bearers and followers of the Qur'an manifest the will and word of Allah both outwardly and inwardly as well as in words and in deeds. They have both memorized the words of .the Qur'an and their minds have understood the concepts of the Qur'an

In other words, their imagination has acquired the form of the words of the Qur'an, their intellect has apprehended its concepts and in practice they have manifested the Qur'anic truths; that is, their

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.Ibid., vol. ٨٧, p. ١٣٨ -١

entire being from head to toe has become Godly and Qur'anic. When you look at what they have memorized, you perceive that they are memorizers of the Qur'an. When you look at their knowledge, you see that they are bearers of Qur'anic knowledge and .they have understood its concepts

When you look at their deeds, you perceive that they act according to the dictates of the Qur'an. It is for this reason that their existence is a mirror of the Qur'an; that is to

say, their existence is a mirror of the perfection of Allah and, by means of His Word, Allah is manifested in their beings; for this reason respect towards them is respect to .Allah

:In regard to the lofty and high status of the Qur'an, the Noble Prophet (S) states

The Qur'an is a guide away from misguidance and a light and liberator from" blindness. It is a cause of deliverance from error and a light and brightness in the dark. It is a predictor of what is to come in the future and a protector from perdition; a cause of growth and a guide for finding the right way in misguidance. It is an explicator of every sedition and deviation and takes man from the mean world to the bliss of the hereafter and in it is the perfection of your religion and there is no person (who turns away from the Qur'an except that he is led to hell."(١

Also it has thus been recorded in a hadith in

.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۴, p. ۴١ -١

regard to the necessity to pay heed to the Qur'an, know it and select it as the book of :prosperity and redemption

Every person who derives their religion from the Book of Allah and the sunnah of the" Prophet (S) is stronger [and firmer] than the mountains and whoever acquires his (religion from the people will be misled by those very people."(١

Elsewhere, in regard to the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), the Noble Prophet (S) :states

I will be the first person on the Day of Resurrection to meet Allah, the All-mighty and" All-powerful, with the Qur'an and my Ahl al-Bayt ('a). Then after me will come my nation, from whom I will ask what they did with the Book of Allah and my Ahl al-Bayt (('a)."(٢

That which has been mentioned was for the purpose that we appreciate that the Qur'an has many blessings whether in its material or spiritual aspect and man derives more virtue and benefit from the Qur'an the nearer he is to it, the more affectionate he is with it and the more he reflects upon it. The virtue and superiority of the Qur'an is so much that a hadith in this regard has been recorded. It is narrated that an individual asked one of the Infallibles, "What is the cause of your superiority over others?" The Infallible responded, "The cause of our superiority over others is that the knowledge of the Qur'an is with us."

Therefore, it is befitting that we ought to always strive to honor

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۱- Usul al-Kafi, p. ۷, introduction [muqaddamah].

۲- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۴, p. ۴۰۰.

and venerate the Qur'an and never perceive the Gracious Qur'an in the same light as we perceive other books. Conceiving the Qur'an as higher than other books must not be confined to belief of the heart. Our conduct with the Qur'an should not be the same as our conduct with other books.

In addition to respecting the Qur'an in our hearts, we also have to have outward and apparent respect for the Qur'an; that is to say, our outward and apparent respect of the Qur'an has to be like our inward respect towards it. There is no doubt that this same respectful and cordial conduct with the Qur'an increases our faith.

Some of the prominent Muslim scholars would never sleep in the room where they kept the Gracious Qur'an. They never even used to sit with their legs stretched out in the rooms where they kept the Qur'an. There is a story narrated by both 'Allamah Tabataba'i and Shahid Mutahhari in regard to Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Amoli, may Allah be pleased with him, that one night as a result of excessive tiredness the late Shaykh Amoli leaned on a pillow and stretched while reciting the Gracious Qur'an. The following day his mentor, the late Mirza 'Ali Aqa Qadi, may Allah be pleased with him, who was also the mentor of 'Allamah Tabataba'i as well as the mentor of other

prominent Muslim scholars, promptly said to him, "It is not good to stretch your legs ".while reciting the Qur'an

Indeed, on account of

venerating the Qur'an and laying the foundation for propagating Qur'anic culture in the society, we have to respect the teachers of the Qur'an and if we ourselves are one of the bearers of the Gracious Qur'an and we see other people respecting us, we should not think that because we are one of the teachers of the Qur'an we are no longer obliged to respect the other bearers of the Qur'an because there is no contradiction in one teacher of the Qur'an respecting another, just as respecting the sayyids and the Progeny of the Noble Prophet (S) is incumbent upon all including the sayyids themselves. When man sees a sayyid, he remembers the Noble Prophet (S) .and it is for this reason that he respects him, even if he himself is a sayyid

In regard to one of the great scholars who was also a sayyid, it has been narrated that one day as he was leaving a social gathering, his son respectfully paired up his father's shoes so as to make wearing them easy. His father got very displeased with this and said, "Fatimah's progeny do not have to pair my shoes." Therefore, if a person is a sayyid, he ought to respect other sayyids and if he is a Muslim scholar, he ought to respect other scholars and there is no hindrance in one respected scholar respecting the other scholars. One scholar must respect other scholars on account of the fact that they are also religious scholars and bearers

of Qur'anic knowledge and in reality this conduct is tantamount to venerating the .Qur'an itself

c) Respecting a Just and Equitable Ruler

The third group of people whose respect is tantamount to veneration of Allah is the group of just and equitable rulers, and before we embark upon the need to respect

the just ruler, we will initially explain the need for a government and the law in a society and the qualifications of a custodian of Muslim affairs.

The Need for a Government and Law in Society

The late 'Allamah Tabataba'i states: "Authority denotes sovereignty, and is one of the necessary relative notions which man is in want of. In any case, the thing which mankind initially has need of is creating a society—in the sense of cohesion and connection of individuals of a community with one another whose every individual has a goal and will for themselves which is other than the goal and will of other individuals —not a society from the aspect of individual persons without cohesion and relationship; for the reason that every individual person has wants and goals which are different from the wants and goals of other individuals.

Every individual wants to destroy the successes of other people and to overcome them and to violate the rights of other human beings and in the end disorder and chaos arise and a society which is meant to be the cause of prosperity for man becomes the cause of his misery and perdition. In order to get rid of this problem, there is no other way except that the society has to create an

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invincible and prevailing power in order to bring under its influence the rest of the powers and forces.

This power has to bring all individuals under its control and consequently bring to justice and equilibrium rebellious forces which want to violate the rights of other individuals. This power also emancipates and liberates weak individuals form their weak and defenseless position and brings them into equilibrium until finally all forces of the society become equal in regard to power and weakness and that is when every one of those forces occupies its rightful place, and everyone enjoys his rights."(١)

This makes it clear that man's life has a social and communal existence. Now some questions come up. Why is man's life social? Is his communal existence deterministic and one imposed on man or does man's nature necessitate a social life? Is there or is

?there not any logical and volitional factor in choosing an effective social life

All these are topics which are put forward for discussion, but our opinion is that the logical and intellectual factor in choosing social life is effective because man conceives his social benefits and observes that his material and spiritual needs cannot or will not be secured in a desirable manner without social life and for this reason he lives in a .community and accepts its conditions

The other point is that social life entails clashes between the interests of the people in a society. That is to say, when people intend to have social life and

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.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۳, p. ۱۴۴ -۱

live and work together and share and distribute the fruits of joint efforts, disputes arise among their interests. There are certain people who intend to derive a greater share and derive unlimited benefit from natural bounties and would like to deal with other human beings in whatever manner they please and this is not desirable to .others

For this reason, a tug of war inevitably arises on the social scene prevention of which calls for setting up bounds and limits and laws must be devised. This also is a self-evident matter and its clarity lies in the fact that if man were to reflect a little in regard to human desires—whether material or spiritual—of course those related to the social life of man, he would realize that it is not feasible to secure all his wants in an unlimited manner and if people desire to live communally, they must place limits on .their desires and not act on whatever their hearts crave

For this reason, in order to eliminate or reduce conflict, we need limits and laws. If we do not believe in limits and laws for individuals in deriving benefit from social life and if individuals do not obey and follow these limits the aim of social life, which is deriving more and better benefit from natural bounties for the purpose of material and spiritual perfection, will not be fulfilled. Therefore, social life must be managed in such

a way that it provides the background for the day to day

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perfection of all individuals in a society. It is only in this case that the goal of social life .will properly be secured

In the Islamic order which is based on the Islamic perspective and foundations, it is necessary that the law must be divine. The reason for this matter is the claim that Islam as a comprehensive school of thought has all the laws for managing social affairs. We who are the followers of Islam and believe that acting according to its dictates is a guarantee for everyone's prosperity must resist the different schools of thought and religions and inclinations which are found more or less in the majority of .countries and defend our beliefs and ideals with sound reason and invincible logic

Qualifications of a Righteous and Competent Ruler

Up to this point, the need for government and law in society has been explained and because the creation of a government and enforcement of law without a ruler is not feasible, we will now mention some of the qualifications of the custodian of the .government

۱. Knowledge of the law: A person that wants to enforce the law, whether that law is related to internal security, defense, international relations, or other issues, has to have sufficient knowledge of the law, jurisprudence and values on which that law is .founded

۲. Piety [taqwa]: Piety is a general qualification in Islamic culture and in common culture it is called 'dutifulness'. A person who is in charge of social affairs and is a custodian of people's interests has to think about securing

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their expediencies, not securing his own personal interests and gratifying his worldly passions after attaining power, in which case such an individual does not have the

competence to be a manager of people's affairs and lives and also the executor of the law for the reason that he interprets and defines or abrogates the law oppositely and according to his own wishes and sometimes explicitly opposes the law. For this reason, the second qualification for being a custodian of government affairs is ethical .competence, or according to Qur'anic terminology, piety

Expertise: Every person who takes charge of a duty has to have the proficiency to .۳ perform it because merely having knowledge of law and piety are not enough for correctly discharging one's duties. Experience and expertise are also necessary to be able to solve short-term and long-term problems which are always presented to .authorities

There is no doubt that human societies need the law in order to solve small clashes and large conflicts and create limits in making use of personal and social amenities and finally creating equilibrium in communal life and every society requires a ruler and administrator in order to correctly enforce the law and prevent the rebellious and disobedient from lawless behavior; however, the question that exists is whether guardianship and custodianship belong to Allah and human beings become guardians and custodians of other people by the will of Allah or whether human beings are by .principle competent to be guardians and custodians of other human beings

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response, it is said that no human being has the right of guardianship and custodianship over other people because man ought to obey only a person from whom he receives his graces and existential blessings and no one's opinion is obligatory to follow for the reason that ordinary people neither grant man existence .nor are they effective in his immortality and continued existence

That people are not forced to obey one another is the primary principle in the lack of authority of human beings. Therefore, for the reason that man receives all his existential gifts from Allah, the Exalted, he is obliged to only obey and comply with His

orders and following the orders of other than Allah is contingent on the other person .being appointed by Allah

With regard to what has previously been mentioned, when we read the Qur’an we notice that it rejects invalid guardianship, that is to say authority which has not been :approved by Allah

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لاَ تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَى أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يَهْدِی الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

O you who have faith! Do not take the Jews and Christians for allies: they are allies“ for each other. Any of you who allies with them is indeed one of them. Indeed Allah)does not guide the wrongdoing lot.”(١

The sentence ‘Indeed Allah does not guide the wrongdoing lot’ denotes that those) people were an unjust and wrongdoing group and that a wrongdoing oppressor never derives benefit from guidance and

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.Surat al-Ma’idah ۵:۵۱ -۱

never attains his goal and always remains on his wrong path. Therefore, if you too (.find yourselves in their category, you will never attain your aims and goals

:In another verse, the just ruler is thus introduced

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلاَهَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاهَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

Your Guardian is only Allah, His Apostle and the faithful who maintain the prayer and“)give zakat(١) while bowing down.”(٢

All Qur’anic commentators are unanimously agreed that the purport of this verse) regarding the phrase ‘and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give zakat while (.(bowing down’ is Imam ‘Ali (‘a

Therefore, due to the evidence which has been presented regarding the need for a government in the society and also the qualifications which have been mentioned for a just and competent ruler, it is clear that in the era of an infallible man like the Noble Prophet (S) or the Infallible Imams ('a), they alone must occupy the position of head of the government and it is natural that such a government is quite desirable and ideal.

However, this state of affairs is not always feasible and, even in the time of an Infallible Imam ('a), he can only rule in the town and province where he lives and only supervise the rest of the cities and provinces by appointing officials and functionaries. In the age of the Occultation of the Infallible Twelfth Imam, may Allah hasten his reappearance, someone has to take charge of this position and lead the Islamic society

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۱- Zakat: the tax levied on various categories of wealth and spent on the purposes specified in Surat al-Tawbah (or, Bara'ah) ۹:۶۰. [ed.]

۲- Surat al-Ma'idah ۵:۵۵.

on the basis of Allah's laws and the constituents of Islam. He ought to have the following qualifications:

۱. Sufficient knowledge of Islam: For the reason that in leadership and government responsibilities, protecting the Islamic laws and values is the responsibility of the ruler of the Muslims and he is the trustee of the religion and the honor of the people and the divine laws, he has to, more than anyone else, have the qualification of knowledge of the law, piety and ethical competence and the power and expertise to manage affairs. There is a hadith designating that if in a society a person becomes a leader while there is someone else better qualified and worthy than him, even only one man, the society is doomed to failure and decadence until the Day of Resurrection.(۱)

۲. Piety [taqwa]: In a hadith the Prophet of Allah (S) has said that one of the qualifications of a competent leader is piety and chastity in regard to observing divine injunctions.(۲)

Addressing the people of Kufah in regard to the issue of leadership in a society, Imam al-Husayn ('a) said:

"A person is not an imam and leader unless his government is based on the Qur'an, he establishes justice, he is faithful to the religion of truth and he is totally dedicated to the path of Allah."(٣)

Addressing 'Uthman, Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"You should know that among the creatures of Allah, the most distinguished person before Allah is the just imam who has been guided by Allah and he

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١- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٨٨, p. ٨٨.

٢- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ٢, p. ٢۶۶.

٣- Muhammad ibn al-Nu'man (Shaykh al-Mufid), Irshad, p. ١٨۶.

guides others. He stands by the recognized ways of the Prophet's (S) behavior and destroys unrecognized innovations. The Prophet's (S) ways are clear and they have signs, while innovations are also clear and they too have signs. Certainly, the worst man before Allah is the oppressive imam who has gone astray and through whom others go astray. He destroys the accepted sunnah and revives abandoned innovations."(١)

٣. Foresight and management: The third qualification is expertise in the administration of affairs and good management of social issues as well as foresight.

The ability of the leader and his skill at management of social affairs in the way of Islam is a necessary qualification for a Muslim ruler and this qualification calls for many preliminary steps, experience and awareness. If a man attains this level of political adeptness and insight, it is possible to entrust the responsibility of Muslim affairs to him.

Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

O people! The one most worthy of leadership is the person that is more capable and" (more aware about the commands of Allah in regard to it."(2)

The Religious Jurisprudent [Wali al-Faqih]: the Most Righteous and Competent Person

With regard to the criteria and attributes which have been mentioned for the Muslim ruler, we notice that in our era the circumstances for the government of the most competent individual have been provided. In the past, the possibility of setting up a government with such individuals was very difficult and sometimes seemed impossible, and such discussions too were never held and only the issue of 'religious authority' [marja'iyyat-e taqlid] would be discussed.

It is

١- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ٥٢۶, sermon [khutbah] ١۶٣, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

٢- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ١٧٣, sermon [khutbah] ١٨٣, trans. Shahidi.

for this reason that prominent religious scholars who were reformist thinkers and sympathetic to Islam would make an effort to find a person in the form of a religious authority to introduce as the best person to serve the Islamic society.

However, nowadays, thanks to Allah, the circumstances and means are available for bringing governments to hand with competent and worthy individuals in charge and by the grace of this great Islamic revolution and the pure blood of the martyrs, conditions prevail such that the most worthy and competent person can be at the head of government; this blessing has to be greatly appreciated.

We thank Allah that in the Islamic order we enjoy the blessings of the leadership of the 'religious jurisprudent' [wali al-faqih]. Now expressing thanks for this blessing can sufficiently be done only by obeying and following the religious jurisprudent—he is the guarantor of Islamic honor and the unity of the Islamic community.

During the days of Imam Khomeini's life, we enjoyed the benefits of this blessing and

today with a thousand sorrows we have been deprived of the blessings of that great man. Allah, the Exalted, has continued to bless us with the permanence of the shadow .the religious jurisprudent

We thank Allah that the Guardian Council and the well-informed people of the nation chose the most competent and worthy individual among the companions and helpers of the great Imam Khomeini, may Allah be pleased with him, namely Ayatullah .Khamene'i, may Allah prolong his life

All the

people too paid allegiance to him with complete willingness and all the true companions of Imam Khomeini continued on his path with perfect unity. Thanks to Allah that not the least weakness and harm has affected the course of events. We ask Allah, the Exalted, that this unity and solidarity of the authorities may last and become firmer day by day so the great ship of the revolution with the leadership and mastership of our great leader should take us to the shores of safety and desirable .goals

The Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr that respecting and venerating the just leader who rules in accordance with divine law and on the basis of justice and equity is tantamount to respecting and venerating Allah. For this reason, respect for the just leader is respect for Allah and one of the attributes and honors of Allah is governance because some of the divine names of Allah are the Ruler and the Sovereign and divine government practically manifests itself in the just laws of Allah and the just Muslim .ruler is in charge of this vital matter

The leadership of the just Muslim and the guardian of Muslim affairs who rules in accordance with the laws of Allah and intends to practically enforce the laws of Allah in the Islamic society has a level of the guardianship of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) because the custodianship of Allah has originally and principally been (handed over to the Noble Prophet (S

and the Pure Imams ('a) and its lower level has been handed over to the just leader and guardian of Muslim affairs, and it is for this reason that respecting him is tantamount to respecting Allah, the Exalted.

Therefore, in contrast to the impression of some people that respecting the Muslim ruler is not of great importance, if a person respects the great leader and custodian of Muslim affairs for the sake of Allah and the Islamic order, without personal goals and material ambitions, and his respect is because the custodian of Muslim affairs enforces the divine laws of Islam and is the promoter of the Qur'an, he has attained great virtue.

I deem it a personal duty to mention that one of the best and most commendable practices which has been enlivened in our country after the victory of the Islamic revolution by the efforts of the custodian of Muslim affairs is the practice of reciting and memorizing the Qur'an to the extent that we often see on television even very young girls and boys who are memorizers of the Qur'an.

Sometimes, it is seen that a young girl who has not yet learnt how to pronounce words correctly has memorized a third of the Qur'an with the Arabic accent! If you remember well, before the victory of the revolution we had to endure a lot of pains to teach people how to correctly learn to recite the Opening Chapter [Surat al-Fatihah] and one other surah (chapter). Even for the educated

it was hard to learn to recite Surat al-Fatihah correctly. Now, we observe that young girls of six or seven years have memorized a third of the Qur'an and recite it better than us! Is this not a cause of pride? Do we not have to respect a person who has enlivened this practice?

Without the least doubt, respecting such a person is tantamount to respecting Allah and tantamount to respecting the Qur'an. Therefore, we ought not to be negligent of

this matter. If we do not observe this respect, the divine rites of Islam will be wiped out. The continued existence of religion in the society is dependent on the continued existence of the rites of Islam. If these divine essentials do not become prevalent and are not common among the people, they will bit by bit be forgotten and remain .unappreciated

For this reason, we who perceive this great blessing which Allah has blessed us with must acknowledge its worth and respect the great leader of the Islamic system. Of course, as mentioned, the value of this respect is dependent on not having worldly desires and motivations but by discharging our duties for the pleasure of Allah, and respecting the leader of the Muslims is tantamount to respecting the Islamic order and Allah, the Exalted. ▯

Lesson ٣٣: The Need to Hold the Tongue and Censure Its Defects

point

O Abu Dharr! A person who does not guard his tongue renders his good deeds“ useless. O Abu Dharr! Do not be a fault-finder, bootlicker, flatterer or argumentative person. Abu Dharr! Man

p: ٢٠٥

”.is remote from Allah for as long as he is bad mannered

[The Reciprocal Effects of Deeds or Annulment [Ihbat] and Proscription [Takfir

In these explanations, the Noble Prophet (S) explains the importance of watching over the tongue in a different manner. The reason for this is that man ought not to leave his tongue free to say whatever his heart desires but he has to hold his tongue and reflect over what he says. Because talking is very easy and sometimes minor motivations become a cause for too much talking or speaking ill of other people, the prominent religious scholars have tried by the use of different expressions and .various methods to advise us to take care and not let our tongues reign freely

One of those is the Noble Prophet’s (S) expression that anyone that does not guard

his tongue has squandered his deeds and leaves no good works to his account. Perhaps, the point of this expression is that the tongue leaves calamitous effects in the heart and soul of man and breeds mischief as well as depravity which exterminates the rest of man's deeds because as has been recorded in the verses of the Qur'an and successively narrated hadiths, man's deeds affect one another: sometimes man does a certain deed but later on he does another act that changes .the quality of his previous deed and leaves such an effect on it that it wipes it out

In books of theology a discussion has been held under the title 'annulment and proscription [or excommunication of deeds]' [ihbat wa takfir]. Annulment

p: ۲۰۶

habt] means good deeds becoming ineffective; that is to say the bad deeds of man] annul his good deeds and make them useless and ineffective while proscription [or excommunication] [takfir] denotes compensation of sins in such a way that good and decent deeds make up for the breach of previous deeds. And, because the root of all our deeds is belief and disbelief, the most delicate instance of annulment and .proscription [or excommunication] is faith and infidelity

Faith and decent deeds which man acquires after sinning and perpetrating indecent deeds compensate for previous infidelity and bad deeds and like a very bright light, wipe out previous darkness, but the opposite is also true. Disbelief and indecent deeds at the end of man's life can wipe out the effects of previous faith and good deeds and darken man's record and his destiny and, like fire which falls on a harvested yield, they burn everything suddenly. In other words, faith is like a very luminous light which brightens the heart and irradiates the psyche and eliminates .darkness and infidelity

As long as the psyche of man is in this material abode—the world of changes and transformations—it is always on the verge of brightness and darkness as well as increase and decrease of the light and darkness, until it wears the garment of the transient abode and when the opportunity for the choice of belief and disbelief is closed to him there will be no chance left for him no matter how much he

hopes to return to the world once again and embark upon ridding himself of the darkness:

حَتَّی إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ * لَعَلِّی أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِیمَا تَرَکْتُ کَلَّا إِنَّهَا کَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَی یَوْمِ یُبْعَثُونَ

“When death comes to one of them, he says, ‘My Lord! Take me back, that I may act righteously in what I have left behind.’ ‘By no means! These are mere words that he says.’ And ahead of them is a barrier until the day they will be resurrected.”(۱)

In the viewpoint of the Qur’an, there is no room for the least doubt in regard to the influence between faith and infidelity and there are many verses denoting this issue, amongst them:

... وَمَنْ یُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَیَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا یُکَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَیِّئَاتِهِ ...

“And whoever has faith in Allah and acts righteously, He shall absolve him of his misdeeds.”(۲)

Elsewhere, it states:

... وَمَنْ یَرْتَدِدْ مِنْکُمْ عَنْ دِینِهِ فَیَمُتْ وَهُوَ کَافِرٌ فَأُولَئِکَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِی الدُّنْیَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولَئِکَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِیهَا خَالِدُونَ

“And whoever of you turns away from his religion and dies faithless—they are the ones whose works have failed in this world and the hereafter. They shall be the inmates of the Fire, and they shall remain in it forever.”(۳)

The relationship between faith and infidelity exists between good deeds and bad deeds but not in a general sense and not in such a way that whenever a good deed is recorded on man’s record of deeds, a previous bad deed is erased

.Surat al-Mu'minun ٢٣:٩٩-١٠٠ -١

.Surat al-Taghabun ٦۴:٩ -٢

.Surat al-Baqarah ٢:٢١٧ -٣

or that whenever a bad deed is recorded, a previous good and decent deed is blotted out; however, in regard to deeds we have to believe in a detailed exposition in this sense that some good deeds—if they are done in an acceptable and worthy manner—wipe out the effects of previous bad deeds. For example, repentance causes sins to :be forgiven if it is done correctly

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

Whoever commits evil or wrongs himself and then pleads to Allah for forgiveness, will" (find Allah All-forgiving, All-merciful."(١

:Elsewhere, it also states

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَى مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

And those who, when they commit an indecent act or wrong themselves, remember" Allah, and plead for [Allah's] forgiveness for their sins—and who forgives sins except (Allah?—and who do not persist in what they have committed while they know."(٢

Therefore, repentance is like a ray of light which shines on a dark spot and makes it bright. It is not true though that every good deed wipes out the effects of every sin. For this reason, it is possible for a believer to initially taste divine retribution before .finally finding his way to eternal paradise

The soul of man has various aspects and every group of good and bad deeds is related to one of its cases, for example the good deeds which are related to 'case A' do not wipe

.Surat al-Nisa’ ۴:۱۱۰ -۱
.Surat Al ‘Imran ۳:۱۳۵ -۲

out the effects of sin related to ‘case B’ unless the good deed is so bright that it permeates the other aspects of the soul too, or the sin is so polluting that it contaminates the other aspects of the soul, too. For instance, in regard to prayer, the :Qur’an states

وَأَقِمْ الصَّلاَةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفًا مِن اللَّيْلِ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ ...

Maintain the prayer at the two ends of the day and during the early hours of the“ (night. Indeed good deeds efface misdeeds.”(۱

Some of the sins such as bad conduct in regard to parents and drinking alcohol are a hindrance to the admittance of worship. In regard to the ill effects of drinking alcohol, :the Noble Prophet (S) states

My Lord swore and then stated, ‘My slave does not drink alcohol in the world save“ that on the Day of Resurrection I will make him drink boiling water equivalent to the (amount of alcohol which he drank’.”(۲

It is worth mentioning that good and bad deeds sometimes have effects with regard to joys and sorrows or bestowal and negation of graces in this very world, especially good deeds done towards one’s father and mother, which can be a cause of long life and repulsion of calamities and afflictions. On the contrary, lack of respect to other .people (especially teachers and mentors) can result in deprivation of graces

Yes, sometimes good deeds make up for previous bad deeds and sometimes bad deeds wipe out prior good actions. For as long as man

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.Surat Hud ۱۱:۱۱۴ -۱
.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۶, p. ۱۲۶ -۲

is in this world, these influences exist between our endeavors. Allegorically, the heart

or soul of man is like a room which is sometimes dark and becomes bright once light shines in it—sometimes the room is bright and becomes dark once the light is .switched off

Therefore, for as long as man lives in this world, he is exposed to these changes and transformations and it is not true that if man does a good deed the effects thereof remain forever, but it is possible for those good deeds to go to waste as the result of .doing inappropriate deeds

Therefore, the mutual effects of deeds upon one another is a general principle on the basis of which some sins wipe out the effects of some previous good deeds or even become a hindrance for the admittance of good deeds which will be done in the future. It has been recorded in the hadiths that some sins prevent the acceptance and :admittance of good deeds and prayers even for up to forty days

For up to forty days Allah does not accept the prayers and fasting of a person who" gossips about a Muslim man and woman unless the person gossiped about forgives (the gossiper."(۱

:In another hadith, it has been recorded that the Noble Prophet (S) stated

Purify your income in order for your supplication to be granted; verily the supplication" (of a man who eats illicit food is not granted for up to forty days."(۲

In regard to drinking alcohol, the Noble Prophet

p: ۲۱۱

.Mustadrik al-Wasa'il, vol. ۹, p.۱۲۲ -۱

.Ibid., vol. ۱, p. ۱۶۶ -۲

:S) states)

(For forty days the prayers of a person who drinks alcohol are not accepted."(۱"

The purport of the Noble Prophet's (S) sayings in this section of the hadith is that if a person is not careful of his tongue, does not hold it, and says whatever flows across it, no good deeds may remain for him; that is to say, the tongue is so influential that it can eliminate all the previous good deeds. This is a warning to man not to lightly perceive this small appendage in the mouth and reflect before talking in order to fathom the possible effects the words he wants to say might have and whether Allah will be pleased with those words or not. Will those words leave beneficial effects on ?the souls of others or not

After this general advice and recommendation, the Noble Prophet (S) enumerates some of the specific sins of the tongue. Of course, mentioning these sins of the tongue is due to the substantial role they play in changing the personality of a person and in causing his downfall and also for the reason that man is constantly in danger of being .contaminated by them

Censuring of Fault-Finding

One of the mean attributes which the Noble Prophet (S) enumerates is the act of looking for faults in other people. Without the least doubt fault-finding is one of the .unacceptable and inappropriate qualities

The fault-finder, on account of jealousy and enmity, is always searching for the defects and weaknesses of other people and thereafter exposing

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۶, p. ۱۲۶ -۱

them to others deriving pleasure from doing this. This mean quality has been censured in the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths and after examining them we understand that a person who is always looking for the faults of Muslims and stigmatizing them is one of the most wicked and evil of people. Allah, the Exalted, :states

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَهُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَهِ ...

Indeed for those who want indecency to spread among the faithful, there is a painful" punishment in the world and the hereafter."(1)

:And the Noble Prophet (S) states

Every person who spreads and makes apparent the indecent deeds of other people" is like the one who has done that same indecent deed he is spreading rumors about and every person who searches for the secret defects of a believer will not die before being afflicted by and perpetrating that same fault."(2)

One of the inducements which impel man to be constantly looking for the faults of other people is the feeling of lowliness and inferiority. When man has deficiencies, a low and inferior personality and no assets, he cannot see the perfections of other people and it is for this reason that he embarks upon looking for blemishes and damaging the personalities of others to make their perfections less apparent. He tries to find the weak points of other people so as to publicize them. Whenever talk about someone arises, instead of talking about the bright and positive points of

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۱- Surat al-Nur ۲۴:۱۹.

۲- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۳, p. ۳۸۴.

that person, he always talks about their defects.

In a gathering of believers once someone mentions the name of another believer, on the basis of Islamic manners, some people try only to mention the good and praiseworthy attributes of the man named but other people, on account of their weakness in faith, jealousy and inferiority complex, mention the weak and negative points which they know about that person and the misdeeds he has committed. Sometimes, they go a step further and talk about dubious things related to him with much surety and may even accuse him falsely.

It is a bad habit for man to always endeavor at mentioning the weaknesses of other

people and unfortunately there are a lot of people who are afflicted with this blight. Every person can test himself when there is talk about another believer—especially one with whom he is in competition. Does he praise him or is he pleased when mentioning his weak points? Does he try by various means to make others aware that ?another person has faults

In a natural manner, a person has to see whether when the name of an individual is mentioned he loves to mention the good qualities of the individual and praise and respect him in the presence of other people or he embarks upon enumerating his weaknesses and bad qualities and makes him appear small and inferior. This is a very bad habit and its roots, as has already been said, is jealousy and a feeling of lowliness and

p: ۲۱۴

inferiority. He feels pain because of what other people have and he cannot bear to .see other people have what he does not have

We have to bear in mind that it is very good for us to be such that whenever the name of a believer is mentioned, we enumerate his good attributes even if sometimes the conditions and stimulus call for us to mention the person’s defects, like when man is advising and consulting with someone in regard to a fault which they are investigating .in regard to a certain individual—which is a special case

We should not to be bothered by the things other people have and we need to comprehend that the greatest asset of a believer is his connection with Allah. A believer does not perceive any other asset save that connection and, if man comes to possess this asset, he feels greatness in his soul such that all other great things and .assets become inferior in his eyes

He has attained a high level and has gotten drowned in the boundless ocean of greatness and he enjoys the benefits of indescribable pleasure and gratification and it does not make any difference to him whether other people respect him or not, or whether they praise him or curse him. Without the least doubt, such an individual, on

whose heart the ray of faith has shone, is preoccupied with honoring and respecting .the believers because this deed is pleasing to Allah and brings about proximity to Him

In contrast

to the believer whose asset is only faith and attention to Allah and who neither becomes pleased by the respect of other people nor becomes saddened by their disrespect, people who have deficiencies and do not have the asset of faith perceive the highness of their personality according to the measure of respect that other people accord to them. This is what is today termed as 'social status.'

They conceive their personality according to their social standing and the opinions of other people in regard to them and their capital is the positive opinion of other people and their high social standing. They perceive themselves as having a lofty personality when other people praise them and being rejected and lacking in personality when they are reproached and blamed, and they think that the world has come to an end .when others see them in any negative way

Unfortunately, people who have material and spiritual deficiencies—like deficiencies in knowledge, spiritual perfections, wealth and material amenities—cannot see and appreciate the superiorities of other people, and it is for this reason that they embark upon casting doubt on the perfections of others to damage their personalities. This is the attribute of the soul of the fault-finder who is preoccupied with looking and searching for the faults of other people. Such an individual puts his worldly and heavenly prosperity in danger and becomes afflicted by the wrath of Allah as a result .of divulging and narrating the defects of other people

Regarding the prohibition of

:fault-finding and gossiping about other people, Imam 'Ali ('a) states

"O servant of Allah! Do not be quick in exposing a person's fault for he may be forgiven for it, and do not think yourself safe even for a small defect because you may be punished for it. Therefore, every one of you who comes to know the faults of others should not expose them in view of what he knows about his own faults."(1)

Elsewhere, he states that paying attention to one's own defects prevents man from looking for the faults of others:

"He who sees his own shortcomings abstains from looking into other people's shortcomings."(2)

With regard to what has been mentioned, it is befitting that we refrain from searching for and talking about other people's defects as well as damaging the personality of other people and bear in mind that with the prevalence of the disease of fault-finding in the society, the spirit of unity, oneness and brotherhood loses its place to the spirit of disunity and in this case the foundations of the community shake and the structure of social affairs crumbles.

Likewise, fault-finding gives rise to suspicion, enmity and hatred in the society and also causes the personality of some individuals to be trampled underfoot by the whims and caprice of people of weak personality whose greatness lies only in destroying the personalities of other people and likewise as a result of the spread of the disease of fault-finding in the society, ethical bounds disintegrate. Also, this disease incites

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۱- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۴۲۹, sermon [khutbah] ۱۴۰, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

۲- Ibid., p. ۱۲۴۹, pithy aphorisms ۳۴۱.

and strengthens a spirit of sin and depravity in people who might have refrained from a great many sins on account of social considerations.

Censuring of Flattery and Sycophancy

One of the unsuitable attributes which Imam 'Ali ('a) enumerates is flattery. The spirit of flattery and sycophancy, like fault-finding, derives from man's weakness of character and inferiority complex. In reality, this is a quality of people with deficiencies of character who try to make up for their defects by attracting the attention of other people by flattering them, imagining that perhaps by doing so they may secure a higher position for themselves.

This is an attribute of people of weak character who do not conceive the infinite power and dominion of Allah and, as a result, set their greedy and covetous eyes on other human beings and seek their honor and greatness from they who themselves are need of Allah. If man sets his eyes of the Absolute Self-sufficient and seeks help from the Source of existence, he no longer has any need to flatter other people. In regard to the fact that only Allah, the Exalted, is worthy of praise, Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) states:

"O my Allah! You deserve handsome description and the highest esteem. If wish is directed towards Thee, Thou art the best to be wished for. If hope is reposed in Thee, Thou art the Most Honored to be hoped from. O my Allah! Thou hast bestowed on me such power that I do not praise any other than Thee, and I

do not eulogize anyone save Thee. I do not direct my praise towards others who are sources of disappointment and centers of misgivings. Thou hast kept my tongue away from the praises of human beings and eulogies of the created and sustained. O my Allah! Every acclaimer has on whom he praises the right of reward and recompense. Certainly I have turned to Thee with my eye at the treasure of Thy mercy and stores of forgiveness..."(١)

Sometimes, man praises and enumerates the good qualities of a believer for the sake of pleasing Allah and honoring a believer, but sometimes he praises other people as a result of covetousness and carnal desires in order to attract their attention so that they may provide him with material help whenever he needs them.

The spirit of sycophancy and flattery is one of man's disagreeable traits and it is not compatible with faith in Allah because although he ought to perceive his destiny in the hands of Allah, he conceives his destiny to be in the hands of others and, in order for .them to grant him good, he embarks upon flattery

As has been said, the psychological and spiritual source of this attribute is an inferiority complex; that is to say, man feels empty-handed and makes himself dependent on others and to earn some good under the auspices of reliance on them .he may stoop to the means of flattery

It is worthwhile to pay attention to the repercussions of the spread of the spirit

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۱- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۲۶۹, sermon [khutbah] ۹۱, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

of flattery in the society and see what effects too much flattery and praise has on people: beyond the shadow of doubt excessive praise gives rise to pride and vainglory and produces pampered, self-satisfied and over-expectant people and incites the feeling of self-praise and big-headedness and in regard to oppressors. Flattery is a .kind of practical approval and encouragement of their deeds

Sycophancy and praising of others can give rise to their considering this praise as a portion of their good attributes and deeds and as a result of this forget their weak points and, from the opposite side, make the ugly and illicit deeds which they have .committed appear acceptable in their point of view

Flattery, besides being a hindrance to some kinds of ethical edification, changes the course of less capable and selfish individuals as well as making them daring in displaying their weak moral points and oppressive, illogical and evil methods. It is for this reason that the leaders of religion detested this blameworthy method and would warn their followers to strive their utmost against it. In this regard, the Noble Prophet :(S) stated

(Throw dirt in the faces of the sycophants."(1)"

This saying is related to a person who flatters a Muslim; otherwise, the judgment of someone who flatters an infidel is even harsher. This expression is meant to prevent the spread and increase of the mentality of sycophancy in the society. We even know that a person like Imam 'Ali ('a), who was the perfect image of all human

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۳, p. ۲۹۴ -۱

virtues and ideals and was higher than ordinary human beings and the manifestation of divine majesty and beauty, never used to permit anyone to praise and compliment .him in his presence

:Once a group of people praised Imam 'Ali ('a) in his presence, the Imam stated

O my Allah! You know me better than myself, and I know myself more than they" know me. O my Allah! Make me better than what they imagine and forgive whatever (they do not know."(1)

Imam 'Ali ('a) wanted to make them know that he had no need of their praise and did not permit them to praise him so that this objectionable quality, that is to say flattery, would not spread in the Islamic community because if on that day they were permitted to praise Imam 'Ali ('a), on another day they would have praised another ruler and not all people are infallible so as not to be deceived by such flattery; on the contrary, some people are gradually affected by these false compliments and imagine that what other people say in regard to them is correct and this is a great blight that can mislead others into ignorance and cause people to perceive themselves as higher than who or what they actually are and bit by bit believe that which is said in regard to them. Such wrong beliefs result in people deviating from the course of equilibrium and imagining themselves as higher than what they actually are and this can become a .great calamity

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۱- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۱۳۱, wisdom [hikmat] ۹۶, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

In addition to this, improper praise is a sign of hypocrisy and guile. As Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"To praise more than what is due is sycophancy; to do it less is either because of inability to speak or envy."(۱)

Elsewhere, he states:

"If a person falsely praises you for a virtue which you do not have, it is befitting that on another day he reproaches you for a bad attribute for which you are blameless."(۲)

The Imam intends to make this point apparent that flattery and sycophancy never aim at telling the truth and reality, but personal interests compel man to falsely praise other human beings; for this reason, if one day things change for the worse and a person sees his benefit lying in weakening an individual whom he previously used to praise regarding a virtue that was actually absent in his personality, he will embark upon censuring and reproaching that person by attributing to him ugly qualities which are not in his character imagining that perhaps he will earn some benefit in this way.

Therefore, Islam does not permit man to be a flatterer for the reason that the spirit of sycophancy produces ugly effects both in the spirit of the flatterer and the flattered as well as in the community. In reality, the sycophant has to bring himself low in order to pronounce those false praises and Allah, the Exalted, is not pleased to see a believer trample his own greatness and honor underfoot and conceive himself so inferior as to

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۱- Ibid., wisdom [hikmat] ۳۳۹, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

۲- Ghurar al-Hikam, p. ۶۷۱.

embark upon insincere praise of others. The effects of sycophancy on the spirit of the

embark upon insincere praise of others. The effects of sycophancy on the spirit of the flattered is that he forgets himself and imagines that he possesses such a high personality and lofty character that he is entitled to the respect and praise of other people and in the end he disregards the deficiencies and weaknesses of his character .and conjectures his life and conduct as filled with lofty and positive points

:The Noble Prophet (S) states

Whenever you praise your brother in his presence, it is as though you have stuck a" (thorn in his neck."(۱

Besides what has been mentioned, praising wicked and corrupt people results in their becoming daring to abuse and encroach upon other people's rights. A flattering person, besides being guilty of hypocrisy and lies, by means of his false praise and compliments, prepares a suitable ground for perversity, extravagance licentiousness and aggression of the corrupt, especially false leaders and rulers and in reality this in itself is a cause of corruption and partnership in grave and destructive crimes which are committed by oppressors against other human beings. It is for this reason that :the Noble Prophet (S) stated

When a rich person is praised, the Throne of Allah trembles and Allah becomes" (wrathful."(۲

The Noble Prophet (S) states that a person should not be a fault-finder who looks for and recites the weak points of other people and thus defames other human beings because Allah is not pleased at the defamation of people's repute or even at the disclosure of

p: ۲۲۳

.Jami' al-Sa'adat, vol. ۲, p. ۳۲۷ -۱

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۷, p. ۱۵۲ -۲

their defects. He Himself has concealed the defects of people so that they may live with one another with affection and love. He does not permit the believers to divulge

the defects of one another or even reveal one's own faults because man does not even have the right to defame himself. Likewise, the Noble Prophet (S) states not to falsely attribute qualities to people that they do not have due to flattery. In reality, going to extremes in both instances [of praise and fault-finding] is harmful for the believer and a person must not abandon moderation. If one wants to mention the good qualities of other people, he must content himself with that extent that is acceptable for sake of goodness and expediency and not mention people's good attributes for the sake of worldly gain in a way that forsakes moderation.

Censuring of Sarcasm and Verbal Abuse

One of the indecent attributes which the Noble Prophet (S) enumerates is being sarcastic and verbally abusive. Offending the believers with biting and acrimonious words is termed as taunting. Taunting is when someone endeavors to mention the defects and weaknesses of people to them and thus wound or provoke them. It is befitting for a person to endeavor at consoling other people for their failures and to try to pronounce words which serve as salve on their wounds, not to speak as though those people deserve and are entitled to their troubles and failures. Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"The sharpness and incisiveness of the tongue is more than that of

p: ۲۲۴

the spear."(۱)

The source of spiteful words is enmity and vindictiveness which impels one who taunts to use virulent and venomous words when talking to another person. It is likely for the appearance and contents of his words to be correct, but he utters them acrimoniously and cruelly which causes pain and sadness for the other person. When discussing academic issues with another person, he could use soft words to make the other understand that he has not understood something correctly, but instead he makes him understand by means of an indirect statement, a hint and biting words.

When a person seeks to help others become aware of their faults, he should say it

with words that are going to be effective and help them understand their mistakes in such a way that they will concede and not become angry and persistent in their mistakes and in addition to the first mistake, make a second mistake due to obstinacy and consequently cascade into ignorance and stubbornness because a wrong method .of mentioning the fault and thereafter correction becomes more difficult

In order to enjoin the good and forbid the evil, some people behave in such a manner that not only is the other person not corrected and not attracted to recommended things, but is prompted to more evil by means of bad methods of advising and sometimes by censuring and repeated reproaching. It is for this reason that Imam 'Ali :('a) states

Refrain from censuring and reproach because it makes sin appear big and"

.Ghurar al-Hikam, p. ۳۸۲ -۱

(renders advice ineffective."(۱

Reprimanding people who repeatedly censure and reproach other people, Imam 'Ali :('a) states

(Excessive reproach and blame flames the fire of stubbornness."(۲"

Refrain from repeated censuring of people for the reason that reproaching the" wrongdoer over and over again makes him audacious and stubbornly persistent in his (misdeeds; in addition, it renders advice ineffective."(۳

Therefore, when you want to remind someone about his weaknesses, encounter him with cheerfulness, kindness and consolation. Your tongue ought not to be as stinging as a scorpion's bite. Speak in such a way that will persuade that person to embark .upon correcting and edifying their weakness

If one says that the other person has made a mistake or that he does not understand

and other expressions like this, it is natural for him not to be pleased and become angry. If we were in his position and were talked to in a stinging manner, would we not become annoyed? Every person becomes angry and reacts once he is talked to in an improper manner, affronted or treated rudely unless one is so pious that he .graciously keeps quiet and does not respond

That being the case, when we ourselves do not tolerate rude encounters, how do we hope to incite other people to edify their characters by means of our biting words? If we always intend to do good to other people, our behavior and conduct will always be .the expression of good human morals with which we have been endowed

Censuring of Obstinance [Mara’] and Insistence on One’s Opinion

The fourth undesirable quality which the Noble

p: ۲۲۶

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۷, p. ۲۱۶ -۱

.Ibid., p. ۲۳۲ -۲

.Ghurar al-Hikam, p. ۲۷۸ -۳

Prophet (S) mentions is obstinacy in one’s errors. Obstinate behavior denotes rejection of the another person’s words and proving one’s own superiority in such a way that a person is not willing to admit one’s own mistake when he commits it and he justifies his own words with explanations with the intention of rectifying his own error and he does this repeatedly because every time he insists on his mistake, the other side also sees that the adamant person is trying to portray as right that which is .wrong

When the spirit of contention and bickering is aroused in man, he tries to impose his ideas on others and this attitude derives from egotism and selfishness; that is to say, man cannot easily admit his errors and say that he has made a mistake because he conceives it as demeaning to his position. Although he knows that he has made a mistake, he does not want other people to know that he has committed an error. It is

for this reason that once others explain a person’s mistakes to him and make him conceive his errors, he stubbornly rejects their explanations and tries to portray his ideas as right and insists that what he has said is correct!

There is no doubt that uncompromising behavior is not devoid of injury to other people and incites their anger and protest. It is for this reason that obstinacy causes stubborn people to attack one another and each one of them tries to prove that

his opinion is superior. The Noble Prophet (S) states:

“Rid yourselves of obstinacy because there is no wisdom in it and no man remains safe from its evil.”(١)

Obstinacy and stubborn insistence on one’s opinion is not a desirable quality and unfortunately some educated people become corrupted by it. When they put forward a wrong opinion during academic debate, they stubbornly insist on their opinion and feel as if they have lost if they concede to the opinion of their friend.

Even worse, if there is a third person overseeing the debate, they try even harder to defend their assertion in order to protect their repute; especially if that third person is a student and disciple! In short, all these are incentives for man not to admit the truth and to prefer untruthfulness over the truth.

With regard to the consequences of stubbornness and obstinacy which are directed at man, it is worthwhile for a person to embark upon fighting this quality. One of the calamities which stubbornness breeds in man is presenting unreal and untruthful opinions.

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states:

“Stubborn insistence on one’s own opinion corrupts man.”(٢)

One of the calamities of stubbornness mentioned in the words of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is that man’s soul becomes sick and diseased:

"(۳)Stubbornness and obstinacy impairs the soul."(

One of the calamities mentioned in the words of Imam 'Ali ('a) is the degeneration of man's mind and the decadence of his thoughts:

"(۴)The obstinate person does not have a correct opinion."(

The way of curing and fighting stubborn insistence on one's

۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲, p.۱۳۸.

۲- Ghurar al-Hikam, p. ۳۶.

۳- Ibid., p. ۱۷.

۴- Ibid., p. ۳۱.

incorrect opinion is for man to uproot pride which gives rise to a false manifestation of virtue and knowledge from his inner being and know that obstinacy causes enmity and hatred and destroys affection and brotherhood.

Likewise, it is befitting of students to try to get rid of obstinacy by adopting a negative stand against it and always conceding to correct opinions and speaking good and correct words so that consequently the spirit of magnanimity and conceding to the truth becomes their habit and second nature and the quality of stubbornness and obstinacy is uprooted from their hearts.

In order to get rid of stubbornness and obstinacy, man has to convince that every person, whether he likes it or not, makes mistakes and errors and it is not true that any human being is immune from error. Only the Infallibles are immune from errors and all the others are likely to make mistakes. People make mistakes either in explaining and narrating things or in understanding and conceiving them. This is not something unexpected and happens for everyone, and for this reason it should not be construed as a defect. Of course, man should strive to make fewer mistakes, especially in his lessons and academic debates by studying longer and harder.

However, when one makes a mistake he ought not to construe it as a great personal .defect and think that he has lost his repute and is a failure

Secondly, once he understands that he has made a mistake, he has to

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immediately admit his mistake and admit that the other person is right. Of course, it is hard to admit one's errors the first time, but after one tastes the sweetness of admitting his mistakes and comprehends that making mistakes regarding his views and opinions is not a defect, it becomes easy for him. He tells himself that he is a human being and is not immune from error and sometimes people make mistakes .and others understand, and at other times the opposite is true

How good it is also that he should thank his friend who has made him aware of his error and has shown him the right way and the correct opinion. One should not content himself with keeping silent because if we want to be set free from the attribute of stubbornness and obstinacy, we have to try to adopt a position opposite to it and the position opposite to obstinacy is admitting one's mistakes. Man has to tell ".his friend, "You understood the matter very well and I did not comprehend it

As a result of this sweet and good conduct, not only does one not feel like a failure or feel deficient, but this suitable behavior brings about a sweet life full of intimacy and .sincerity and man becomes more beloved and trusted by other people

On the other hand, when a person tries to justify his erroneous words and conceal his mistakes, other people's confidence in him is taken away and they will not pay

p: ۲۳۰

any attention to him even when he wants to say something worthwhile and true. However, when one admits his mistakes and concedes to the correct opinion of the other person, they put their confidence in what he says because they know that he does not utter careless remarks and, as a result of this conduct, his social standing .also rises

Of course, one should not seek after and be pleased with a better social position, but conceding to the truth has such an effect and result. Both the trust that other people have in him increases and their love for him as well, and also his social rank improves. In addition to that, he is delivered from the ugly attribute of obstinate behavior. Of course, one must not fall in love with his social standing and must put his trust in Allah and that which is pleasing to Him and in every deed one's incentive has to be winning the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, and other good effects are subsidiary rewards of .man's conduct

Lesson ۳۴: The Manifestation of Worship and the Role of Mosques in Islam

point

After discussion and review of sections regarding recommendations of the Noble Prophet (S) to Abu Dharr, we now embark on evaluation of another portion of advice .about the mosque, the etiquettes of being in a mosque and the importance of prayer

The Concept and Scope of Worship

point

We will initially embark upon explaining the concept of worship and its scope. As has already been mentioned, man's true perfection is found in proximity to Allah, the Exalted, and the means of attaining

this proximity, the means of man's real perfection, is spiritual service and worship. Divine acts of devotion and veneration of Allah have rich and profound contents and so much attraction that they take every weary person in the sea of bewilderment to .the shores of peace and tranquility and finally towards annihilation in Allah

Indeed, neither pen nor explanation can describe the loftiness and profoundness of the spiritual attraction of worship and in fact this high divine notion cannot be expressed in the form of words and explanations and it is only that true Imam 'Ali ibn :Abi Talib ('a), gallant and in love with worship, who states

O my Allah! The esteem of being your servant is sufficient for me and this glory is“ (adequate for me that you are my Lord.”(١

This saying arises from the spirit of being overflowing with love of worship and .devotional service to Allah

Indeed, worship and spiritual service to Allah has a stable and firm order without which the soul of man would not be satiated, and material attraction and evolution cannot affect or fill the empty space resulting from its loss because no matter how much man makes industrial and technological progress in material fields, not only does he not become free of want of the Absolute Self-sufficient, but his need and .want increases

a) Divisions of Worship

:From a general point of view, worship can be classified into two divisions

١. Worship in specific and particular terms consisting of acts of devotion such as the ,prayers, fasting, the hajj

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١- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧٧, p. ۴٠٢.

.etc

٢. Worship in general terms consisting of every good deed which is done with the intention of obeying Allah, the Exalted. Under this definition even eating, associating with people, talking and other deeds which Allah, the Exalted, has counted as good .and are done with the intention of obeying Him are worship

Therefore, in order for man’s life to be spent on the right course and not in vain, losing this vital asset, a person has to spend most of the moments of his life in devotional service to Allah, whether in its specific or general terms. He should try to perform that which has been legislated as worship according to divine law and/or perform related

.duties and acts with the intention of pleasing Allah in order to gain proximity to Him

If a small or great deed is performed by man and he does not fit it into this framework of specific or general worship, it will be null and void and become a cause of regret on the Day of Resurrection. If, God forbid, an act were a sin and a cause of worldly and heavenly suffering and torment and eternal divine retribution, or if it were not a sin but neither good nor bad [mubah] or disapproved but not forbidden [makruh], it .wastes man's capital on something which has no benefit for him

In divine law there is a great deal of recommendation to perform deeds which are essentially neither good nor bad, but if these deeds are done

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.with the intention to obey this recommendation, they will be acts of worship

Bearing in mind the Islamic and Qur'anic point of view regarding human life, the goal of life, the path of prosperity, one's deeds and conduct, it is natural that the Islamic call ought to be such that one should worship more and better: with regard to quantity, all the deeds that man discharges can become acts of worship and in reality worship acquires such an expansive and wide scope that it encompasses all of man's .existence

However, regarding quality (quality of worship is dependent on intention and knowledge [ma'rifah])—the more a person's awareness and his love for Allah increase, the more his intention in performing acts of worship become purer and the more he has presence of heart when worshiping, the greater the quality of his acts of .devotion

Sometimes two cycles [rak'ats] of prayer have more divine reward than thousands of prayers. This is something we all know and Islam has made us pay heed to the fact that we must try harder to make our deeds more divine and our lives entirely devoted to Allah because our perfection is found in spiritual service to Allah. The Noble Prophet :(S) states

The most worthy of people is he who adores worship, embraces devotional service" to Allah and loves it with all his heart. His whole body and soul is immersed in it and all his efforts are focused upon it and therefore he pays no importance to ease or

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hardships of the world."(۱)

With regard to what has been said, it is natural that the One that has considered such a goal for humanity, has provided all the circumstances that are necessary for man to be able to make all his deeds divine and has made available all the means that can help people to worship better and more because the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, is greater than that of any other and He wants all His servants to become nearer to Him more than anyone else. Just as His Being and knowledge is infinite, His will to do good too is endless; the love which He has for His servants too has no bounds or limits.

One who has such endless mercy and desires so much good for His servants legislates injunctions which will draw His servants closer to Him. It is for this reason that legislating divine laws, obligatory and recommended acts of worship and also determining the quality and etiquettes are all divine graces. Allah, the Exalted, desires that we attain the perfection and prosperity which is befitting of us and even more. It is for this reason that He has provided the necessary means existentially and legislatively.

b) Prayer, Zenith of Devotional Service and Proximity [Qurb] to Allah

Existentially, the more mercy Allah has for his servants, the more grace He grants for them to discharge duties and acts of worship; of course, what Allah does is not extravagant and is according to special as well as particular divine laws. Legally, He encourages people by legislating injunctions

p: ۲۳۵

۱- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۱۳۱.

the discharging of which make His servants nearer to Him. One of the things He has

the discharging of which make His servants nearer to Him. One of the things He has enjoined is prayer, which is the best means to gain proximity [qurb] to Him. The :Infallibles state

(Prayer is a means of proximity for every pious believer."(١)"

Of course, we ought to bear in mind that it is not the form and outward appearance of prayer that brings about this proximity and nearness to Allah, but the reality and essence of prayer that causes man to acquire proximity and from the point of view of the Qur'an and the hadiths the reality of prayer is the original and main goal, not the :outward form. Allah, the Exalted, states

... وَأَقِمِ الصَّلاَةَ لِذِكْرِى

(And maintain the prayer for My remembrance."(٢)"

:Elsewhere, Allah, the Exalted, states

وَأَقِمْ الصَّلاَةَ إِنَّ الصَّلاَةَ تَنْهَى عَنْ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ...

And maintain the prayer. Indeed the prayer keeps away from indecency and evil, and" (certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest."(٣

Allamah Tabataba'i states, "The context of this verse bears witness to the fact that' the purport of the prayer keeping away from indecency denotes that the very nature of prayer inhibits corruption and prohibited acts. You might ask how prayer prevents .us from committing indecency

In response, we say that if Allah's servant performs the five daily prayers each day continuously all his life, especially if he does them with all his fasts in a righteous society and the individuals of that society also fast diligently as he does, naturally such prayer

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ١٠, p. ٩٩ -١

.Surat Ta Ha ۲۰:۱۴ -۲

.Surat al-'Ankabut ۲۹:۴۵ -۳

is not compatible with commission of mortal sins. Indeed, paying attention to Allah through servitude in such an environment and with such people should inhibit man from every kind of sin including murder, aggression, seizure of the property of .orphans, adultery or fornication and other acts which religion considers iniquitous

Not only does it prevent the perpetration of sin but also even the thought of it because prayer is the remembrance of Allah and this remembrance imbues in the worshipers faith in the Oneness of Allah, the Exalted, the prophetic mission and divine retribution on the Day of Resurrection and inspires the worshippers to address their Lord with purity as well as sincerity of intention, seek assistance from Him and request that He guide them on the straight path; in addition, they seek refuge in Him from misguidance and His wrath. Also, prayer impels man to become attentive to the threshold of the greatness and magnificence of Allah and to remember their Lord with (praise, adoration, gratitude and exaltation."(۱

However, from the perspective of the hadiths, it has been narrated from the Noble Prophet (S) that the Divine Essence of Allah does not pay attention to the prayer of a person whose heart is not harmonious with his body and his soul is not attentive to his .prayer

It is very clear that this hadith alludes to the true spirit of prayer, which is invocation and remembrance of Allah because remembrance of Allah is the goal of prayer. It brings purity

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.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۱۶, p. ۱۳۳, Isma'iliyan Publications -۱

and serenity to the heart and refines and perfects it, preparing it for divine manifestations. In regard to the fact that remembrance of Allah is the heart of prayer, :Imam 'Ali ('a) states

"Certainly, Allah the Glorified, the Sublime, has made His remembrance luminosity for the hearts which hear with its help despite deafness, see with its help despite blindness and become submissive with its help despite unruliness."(1)

In continuation, he states:

"In all periods and times when there were no prophets, there have been persons with whom Allah, precious are His bounties, whispered through their thoughts and spoke through their wisdom."

Also, it was with due consideration of the reality of prayer and its importance that Imam 'Ali ('a), in the middle of the jihad and fighting against the enemy during the battle of Siffin, looks at the sky to see if the time for the noon prayers has arrived so that he can perform his prayers. Ibn 'Abbas asks him, "What are you doing?" The Imam responds, "I am looking at the sky to see if it is time for prayer in order to pray."

Ibn Abbas says, "Is this the right time to perform prayers? At the present, war and fighting do not afford us the opportunity to perform our prayers." In response, the Imam states, "Why are we fighting them? We are at war with them for the sake of prayer!"(2)

Indeed, prayer in the view of Imam 'Ali ('a) possesses such greatness that nothing becomes a cause for him to turn

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1- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ٧٠٣, sermon [khutbah] ٢١٣, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

2- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٨٠, p. ٢٣.

his back on it. In addition, prayer in his point of view is pleasure—gratification which is not comparable to any other satisfaction. In his view, prayer is overflowing with brightness and has no darkness, bleakness or grief and spiritual service is serenity and purity in its entirety.

In his perspective, fortunate is a person who sets foot on this boundless field [i.e.

prayer] and soothes his soul with its life giving rays because the world becomes small and inferior in the eyes of a person who has set foot on this infinite domain and he will not be ready to quit prayer even at the time of fighting with the enemy because he desires everything else only for the sake of prayer and he sets his heart on prayer because it is a whispered word with his Lord—a conversation with Allah. In a letter to :'Uthman bin Hanif Ansari, Imam 'Ali ('a) writes

Blessed is he who discharges his obligations towards Allah and endures his hardship,“ allows himself no sleep in the night but when sleep overpowers him he lies down on the ground using his hand as a pillow, keeps wakeful along with those who fear the Day of Judgment, and are ever away from the beds, whose lips whisper in remembrance of Allah and whose sins have been erased through their prolonged beseeching for forgiveness. 'They are the party of Allah; be it known, verily the party (of Allah alone shall be the successful ones'.” (۵۸: ۲۲)(۱)

c) The Philosophy of Divine Legislation for the Preliminaries of the Prayer and Factors for Attention in Prayer

With regard to the

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۹۷۴, chapter [kitab] ۴۵, no. ۱۵, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

importance of prayer and its role in the well-being of the individual and the society, Allah, the Exalted, has set preliminaries [muqaddamat] in order for it to be performed better and he has fixed etiquettes in order for his servants to remember Him more and conceive the importance of prayer. In order for man to perform a good deed, he first has to know that that deed is good and then after that think about that deed. We are aware of the goodness of many deeds, but we forget about performing them on .time

Therefore, in order for us not to forget prayer, Allah, the Exalted, has prepared preliminaries, for instance, he has legislated the call to prayer [adhan]. He has made

prayer incumbent and has emphasized that it certainly has to be performed and not abstained from. In addition to this, He has set another form of worship by the name of adhan as a preliminary and reminder for the prayer and has ordered that it must be recited with a loud voice in order that the people be reminded about the scheduled .time of prayer and also to incite motivation for the performance of prayer

Although Qur'anic verses and hadiths which have been recorded in this regard all help man to perceive the importance of prayer, still when the time for prayer arrives and the people hear the sound of the adhan, attention is drawn to prayer and therefore this preliminary is a very effective factor for attracting

.attention to the importance of prayer

A lot of people for whom performing prayer on time has become a habit, often become heedless of prayer when they are busy with work and even forget that prayer time is due but, when they hear the loud sound of the adhan, willingly or unwillingly, they become attentive to the prayers. Therefore, the wisdom behind legislating the adhan and the emphasis on reciting it loudly is to remind people and make them attentive to prayer and consequently this is itself a means of inviting .others to perform acts of worship on time

:In regard to the virtues of performing prayer on time, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states

Whenever you want to perform an obligatory prayer, be like a person whose time to" bid farewell with the world has arrived and he fears that he may not have the opportunity to say his prayers again. Perform your prayers at their earliest possible (time."(۱

:Likewise, it has been narrated from Ibn Mas'ud that

I asked the Prophet of Allah, 'What deed is more beloved to Allah?' He stated, 'The" (most beloved deed to Allah is performing prayer on time'."(۲

In addition, in order to encourage people more to perform acts of worship and to incite the spirit of devotion and servitude in people, Allah, the Exalted, has determined .specific times and places to encourage and remind the people more about prayer

For example, he has determined Thursday nights and Fridays for worship so that the essence of attention to Fridays and the

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۸۰, p. ۱۰ -۱

.Ibid., p. ۱۳ -۲

fact that such a day is especially reserved for worship reminds man to perform acts of spiritual service and refrain from vain activities. Likewise, the virtues of the month of Dhu al-Qa'dah and the first ten days of the month of Dhu al-Hijjah are themselves a reminder of spiritual service to Allah because in these forty days Prophet Moses ('a), upon Allah's invitation, was busy with devotional service to Allah on the mountain of :Tur. In this regard Allah, the Exalted, states

وَوَاعَدْنَا مُوسَى ثَلاَثِينَ لَيْلَةً وَأَتْمَمْنَاهَا بِعَشْرٍ فَتَمَّ مِيقَاتُ رَبِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً وَقَالَ مُوسَى لأَخِيهِ هَارُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَأَصْلِحْ وَلاَ تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

And we made an appointment with Moses for thirty nights, and completed them with" ten [more]; thus the tryst of his Lord was completed in forty nights. And Moses said to Aaron, his brother, 'Be my successor among my people, and set things right and do (not follow the way of the agents of corruption'."(۱

The forty days which Moses ('a) spent in worship on the mountain of Tur is popularly known as 'the forty days of the Jews' [arba'in-i kalimiyyah] and the spiritual wayfarers accord a lot of importance to it and have enumerated particular etiquettes and orders for it and during those days they mainly engage in worship; what is more, in our hadiths particular features have been mentioned for those forty days. For instance, it :has been narrated in a hadith that

Allah, the Exalted, makes springs of wisdom flow from the heart onto the“

.Surat al-A‘raf ۷:۱۴۲ -۱

(tongue of a person who is sincere to Him for forty days.”(۱

Rewarding effects for one who worships Allah for forty days or memorizes forty) hadiths and various things of this nature have been mentioned in numerous (.narrations

In addition, blessed days, festivals, nights of keeping vigil and the month of Ramadan have benefits so that making use of them and realizing their circumstances and timeliness may lead people to remember and worship Allah more so that man may remember his prosperity lies in devotional service and worship of Allah and it is not .befitting to turn back from Allah and set one’s attention on other than Him

[The Mosque, Place of Ascension for Lovers of the Beatific Vision [Liqa’ Allah

Besides the particular times, Allah has also determined special places for worship such that when people are directed towards those places and enter them, they automatically remember Allah and their devotional duties. It is for this reason that the existence of those places brings about more motivation and attention to Allah and .spiritual service to Him and, in general, mosques play this role

Though it is permissible for people to perform their prayers in all places except usurped places or places which for one reason or another are not permissible, Islam has put a lot of emphasis on performing obligatory prayers in the mosque and being committed to going to the mosque, especially for people that are neighbors of a :mosque. The Noble Prophet (S) states

The prayer of the neighbor of a mosque is not acceptable unless performed in the“ (mosque.”(۲

In regard to the emphasis which

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷, p. ۲۴۹ -۱

.Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ۳, p. ۴۷۸ -۲

has been recorded in the hadiths, the religious jurisprudents have considered praying in the mosque for those people living in the neighborhood of a mosque as an emphatic recommendation [mustahabb mu'akkad] and abstaining from it as an undesirable act :[makruh]. The late Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Yazdi states

It is abhorred [makruh] for the neighbors of the mosque to perform their prayers in" (other than the mosque without an excuse."(۱

Therefore, it is befitting for man to always be present in the mosque and perform his prayers in the mosque and to reflect on the status of the mosque and observing its etiquettes and honoring it and to think about the undesirability of not being present there. Also, one should realize that besides the rewards which have been mentioned for being present in the mosque and performing one's prayers there, Allah, the Exalted, has made man beholden to Him in regard to designating the mosque as His .house and granting permission to His servants to be present there

It is natural that all of the earth is the same in the viewpoint of Allah and no place is nearer than the other to Him, therefore the purport of this assertion that the Ka'bah and the mosque are Allah's houses is that Allah, the Exalted, deals with every one of these places in the same way that every one of us deals with their own houses. That is to say, He has made these places for meeting, visiting and having familiarity with Him and

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.Urwat al-Wuthqa, p. ۲۱۱' -۱

.for admitting his servants and visitors so as to converse with them

Besides that, he accepts as a mosque or place of meeting and visiting Him every place which we want to set up as a mosque or place of meeting Him and this means that He has given us permission to determine the place of meeting and visiting Him and this is .the greatest mark of honor He has permitted for us

For this reason, the greatest role of the mosque is directing man's attention to Allah and promoting the feeling of worship and servitude in them, even if various mosques are not equal from the perspective of position and rank and some mosques are more .important and loftier than others

Imam Khomeini, may Allah be pleased with him, says, "In the divine law [shar'] of Islam, it has been recommended that it is better to perform prayers in the mosque and the best of all mosques is the Masjid al-Haram (the Sacred Mosque) and after that the Masjid al-Nabi (the Prophet's Mosque) and after that the Mosque of Kufah and after that the Masjid Bayt al-Maqdas (Mosque of Jerusalem), and after the Mosque of Jerusalem comes the Friday Mosque [masjid jami'] of every city and after that comes the local mosque and after the local mosque comes the mosque of the (bazaar."(۱

:Imam 'Ali ('a) states

Four mosques are heaven's palaces on earth; the Sacred Mosque, the Prophet's" (Mosque, the Mosque of Jerusalem and the Mosque of Kufah."(۲

These four mosques are

.Risalah Tawdih al-Masa'il, question [mas'alah] ۸۹۳ -۱

.Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ۳, p. ۵۴۵ -۲

so great and holy that it has even been recommended in some of the hadiths that people, from near and far, have to travel to visit them and spiritual retreat [i'tikaf] in them has a lot of divine reward. In regard to the virtues of the Mosque of Kufah,

:Imam al-Baqir (‘a) states

If the people knew the Mosque of Kufah, they would prepare provisions and mount“ horses in order to reach it. One obligatory [wajib] prayer in this mosque has the divine reward equivalent to one hajj and one recommended [mustahabb] prayer in it has the (divine reward of one ‘umrah.”(١

The Sacred Mosque is so great that the Ka‘bah, the direction of prayer for the Muslims, is paced there and the Muslims are obliged to perform their prayers while facing the direction of this mosque and the Holy House. In addition, pilgrimage [hajj] to it for people who have become capable to discharge religious obligations is incumbent [wajib] and performing prayer in it has the divine reward of one million :cycles [rak‘ats] of prayer performed in other mosques. The Noble Prophet (S) states

One cycle [rak‘at] of prayer in my Mosque is equivalent to one thousand cycles of“ prayer in any other mosque and one rak‘at of prayer in the Sacred Mosque is (equivalent to one thousand rak‘ats in my Mosque.”(٢

:In addition, in regard to the virtues of this holy Mosque, Imam al-Baqir (‘a) states

If] a person recites his incumbent prayers in the Sacred Mosque, Allah accepts all the]“ incumbent prayers

p: ۲۴۶

.Ibid., p. ۵۲۵ -١

.Ibid., p. ۵۴۵ -٢

which he has recited since the beginning of his puberty (age at which discharging (religious duties becomes incumbent) up to the end of his life.”(١

Besides these mosques, other mosques too have virtues, such that it has been :narrated in a divinely inspired hadith

Allah, the Exalted, states, ‘Verily my houses on the earth are the mosques which“

shine for the dwellers of the sky in the same way that the stars shine for the inhabitants of the earth. Blessed are those who have made the mosques become their houses. Happy is the servant who performs the ritual ablution in his house and then visits Me in My house. Beware! It is incumbent on the one visited to honor his visitor and to do good to him. Give glad tidings to the people who go to the mosques in the darkness of the night that they will have a bright light on the Day of (Resurrection."(٢

The Wisdom of Drawing People's Attention to Mosques

point

There is much wisdom in drawing people's attention to mosques which can generally :be divided in two sections

Social Wisdom .١

When mosques become centers of social activities and several times a day or on Fridays people gather in them with grandeur, the society derives social, economic and political benefits. The Muslims enjoy these benefits and virtues and have derived .them since the beginning of Islam

During the course of Islamic history, the mosque has been the base and bedrock for alleviating intellectual, religious, political and economic problems, a central point for ,the spread and propagation of the rich culture of Islam

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.Ibid., p. ٥٣۶ -١

.Ibid., vol. ١, p. ٢۶٨ -٢

a place of learning the necessary social sciences and the central point for gathering military forces and soldiers for resistance and altercation with the enemy. In general, :we can mention at least four roles

a) A base for worship and remembrance of Allah

b) A base for the intellectual jihad: teaching and learning Islamic sciences

c) A base for Islamic unity and displaying the spirit of oneness and unity against hypocrites and known and unknown enemies

d) A base for gathering soldiers and other forces to be dispatched to the battlefield to fight against enemies

Personal Wisdom .۲

In addition to what has been mentioned, the mosque also has virtues for individuals. When an individual's route passes through the mosque and he finds himself present in it, he becomes more spiritually ready for worship. For this reason, the mosque is a reminder for man to invoke and worship Allah.

Even if a person were not thinking about Allah at all, once he passes by a mosque or dome or the minaret of the mosque, he becomes attentive that this is a house of Allah and immediately remembers his Lord. For people who desire to be loyal servants of Allah, strong awakening and alerting factors as well as more preparedness for spiritual service arise within and, for this reason, such factors are the best means of their perfection and therefore among the factors which result in a person remembering and worshiping Allah more is the existence of particular places for the purpose of worship and spiritual service.

It is

p: ۲۴۸

for this reason that it has been recommended that even in one's own house one place should be allocated as a place of worship and devotional service and one should be careful not to allow it to become unclean so that it constitutes a better atmosphere for remembrance of Allah.

Imam al-Sadiq states:

"Imam 'Ali ('a) had set aside one room of medium size as a place of prayer. He used to

(go with a young baby who would not sleep at night to that room to pray."(۱

In addition to a prayer room in one's home, local mosques are also reminders that make man attentive to Allah and are among the means which Allah has provided for movement towards perfection and prosperity. It is for this reason that when a mosque is built in a local place, the people have to be encouraged to go there and the divine rewards which one earns for going to the mosque and even for every step which is taken to go the mosque have to be made known so that more eagerness for going the mosque arises. People have to be made aware that the mere fact of being present in a mosque results in an increase of blessings and the removal of sins. Imam :al-Sadiq ('a) states

The Noble Prophet (S) states, 'For a person who walks to the mosque with the" intention of participating in the congregational prayers, Allah, the Exalted, grants him seventy blessings as a reward for every step which he takes

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.Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ۳, p. ۵۵۵ -۱

(and his rank too will raise higher to this same level'."(۱

Necessity of Understanding the Importance of Mosques and Their Etiquettes

point

A section of the Noble Prophet's (S) advice in this discussion is related to encouraging the believers to be present in mosques to derive spiritual benefits from them. Another part is related to the rules of conduct of being in a mosque, how one can derive worthwhile benefit from the mosque and what instructions and rules of behavior one must observe so that, Allah forbid, he is not deprived of blessings because sometimes a person is so afflicted by heedlessness and satanic temptations that he converts :means of goodness and prosperity to means of misfortunate and wretchedness

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ كُفْرًا...

“(۲)Have you not seen those who pay back Allah’s favor with disbelief…”(

Regrettably, man is always faced with the danger of transforming Allah’s blessings into retribution and converting the means of providence into factors of misfortune; therefore, after the people have been encouraged to go to the mosques and the rewards of every step which man takes towards the mosque have been enumerated, the believers are still warned to endeavor to make the most worthwhile benefit from mosques and to be mindful of why they have come to the mosque so that, Allah forbid, they do not get preoccupied with conversation about the world, buying and selling, the expensiveness and cheapness of things, the price of the dollar and land and other things of this nature and entirely forget about where they are and for what they

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۱- Ibid., vol. ۵, p. ۳۷۲.
۲- Surat Ibrahim ۱۴:۲۸.

have come!

It is for this reason that special etiquettes have been determined for the mosque the observance of which help prevent a person from being afflicted by heedlessness so that he is not deprived of the spiritual blessings of the mosque.

Before examining the sayings of the Noble Prophet (S), we find it necessary to point out that when man makes the intention to go to the mosque, it is worthwhile to make the utmost effort to know the rules of behavior of being in the mosque to the best of one’s ability because the more one’s knowledge increases, the more valuable one’s deeds become and observing etiquettes results in the proximity [qurb] of man to Allah.

We have to know that when we are present in a mosque it means that we have entered the threshold of Allah, the Exalted, and we are in His presence and it is proper to set as criteria rules of conduct just as when we are in the presence of noble, elderly and respectable people and be overcome by humility, modesty and meekness. We

must also be mindful that the greatness of elderly people is not comparable to the greatness of the Divine Essence of Allah and also the rules of conduct when we are in the presence of Allah are not comparable to the etiquettes of being in the presence of .noble people

With regard to what has been mentioned, we understand that there is no one that has the ability to truly

p: ۲۵۱

observe correct rules of conduct in the presence of Allah. For this reason, we cannot perfectly observe rules of behavior in His presence; therefore, at least we have to pay close attention to our conduct at that time and perceive our weaknesses and shortcomings; this very bit of observation is enough to guide us to the door of Allah's benevolence. In a detailed hadith, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) thus explains the rules of conduct of being in a mosque:(۱)

Whenever you enter a mosque, know that you have called upon the great King and" Lord on whose sacred threshold none but the purified set foot and permission for meeting Him has not been granted save to the truthful and righteous. When you set foot on His divine threshold, know that if just a bit of inattention overcomes you, you are as if on a precipice on the brink of disaster and He is able to deal with you either .with His justice or His grace

Therefore, if He is kind to you and deals with you according to His blessings and mercy and accepts your meager acts of spiritual service, in return He will grant you great reward and benefit, but if He deals with you according to His justice, He will grant you what you rightly deserve and will reject your acts of worship no matter how many .they may be and He will deal with you as He wishes

For this reason at His threshold, acknowledge your incapacity, guilt and need

p: ۲۵۲

.Misbah al-Shari'ah, p. ١٠, section [bab] ١٢, Markaz Nashr Kitab, pocket book -١

because you have the intention of worship and intimacy with Him. Tell your secrets to Him and know that He knows the apparent and hidden things of all creatures and there is not a thing hidden from Him and in His presence resemble the most needy of creatures, remove from your heart whatever prevents you from being attentive to Him and tear away the curtain that is between you and Him because He does not accept save the purest and sincerest of hearts and ponder well in which book your .name will finally be recorded

Then, if you taste the sweetness of invocation and conversation with Him, feel pleasure and drink from the cup of his mercy and benevolence, this is a sign that He has received you favorably and accepted you as His guest and you have to know that .you are worthy of serving Him

Therefore, enter the Mosque because permission and security has been granted to you. If it were other than this, you would be like one who has been left desolate because all doors have been closed to him and he is incapable of doing anything. Know that whenever He conceives that one has truly sought refuge in Him, He will look upon that person with eyes of mercy, clemency and compassion and will make that person succeed at that which is pleasing to Him because He is the Most Generous and He loves to be magnanimous towards those servants who stand abject and forlorn

p: ٢٥٣

:in His presence seeking His favor and satisfaction. He Himself has stated

أَمَّن يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ...

Is He who answers the call of the distressed [person] when he invokes Him and' (removes his distress...'"(١

:In order to encourage us to be present in the mosques, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! A good and pure word as well as every step you take to the mosque is“ ”.charity

The word charity [sadaqah] is a term that is employed much in Islamic culture and its desirability is clear: when it is said that a deed is charity, it is meant that it has extraordinary value and divine reward. Therefore, to make known the loftiness of a deed, it is said that the deed is sadaqah (charity). One thing that has been called .charity is good and commendable words that we tell to others

This is to make us not construe such an act as of little value and to bear in mind that when we say words that are helpful and make others more attentive to Allah and bring about abstention from ugly deeds, or even say words that cause an unhappy believer to become happy and bring about hope and release one from hopelessness and sorrow, those words are desirable to Allah and they are tantamount to worship if .they are said with the intention of obedience and worship of Allah

Initially, the Noble Prophet (S) states that every good word is charity and follows this by saying that every

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۱- Surat al-Naml ۲۷:۶۲.

step taken towards the mosque is also charity and afterwards the central point of his discussion is the mosque. It is natural that once man becomes apprised about the purport and meaning of this saying of the Noble Prophet (S) and he believes that every step he takes to the mosque is charity and has divine reward and benefit, he .will make haste to go to the mosque no matter how far it is from his house

Going to the mosque will not be hard for him and he will not find any pretexts for not going to the mosque no matter how far it may be because he knows that the further !the mosque is, the more divine reward he accrues

Afterwards, in regard to the rules of conduct about being present in the mosque, the

:Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Every person who accepts the invitation of the caller towards Allah and" ".makes goodly endeavor to go to the mosque, Allah will reward him with paradise

Apparently, the meaning of 'the caller towards Allah' is the person who makes the call to prayer [mu'adhdhin] because he invites the people to prayer on behalf of Allah and his duty is to call the adhan with a loud voice and announce that it is time for prayer so that the people gather in the mosque to perform acts of worship. If a person accepts his invitation, that is to say, he moves towards the mosque after hearing the adhan, he causes

.the mosque to thrive and prosper, and his reward is paradise

Abu Dharr asks, "O Prophet of Allah! May my father and mother be your ransom, how "?can I develop the mosque and make it thrive

:The Noble Prophet (S) states

Development of the mosque means that) There should be no voices raised in it,)" falsehood and frivolity should be refrained from, buying and selling should not take place, and all vanity must be abstained from; otherwise, do not blame anyone except ".yourself on the Day of Resurrection

In these sentences, the Noble Prophet makes Abu Dharr aware of four rules of :conduct

Abstinence from shouting and talking loudly in the mosque (۱

Because the mosque is a place of worship and all too often speaking loudly diverts the attention of other people such that they do not manage to mentally concentrate on prayer and other acts of spiritual service. In addition to that, speaking loudly in a gathering is construed as lack of manners and it is befitting that man behave properly and with dignity in the mosque and refrain from deeds which are not befitting of

.proper human conduct

Therefore, one of the instances of establishment of a mosque is that man has to behave with grace and dignity in it and try to observe silence and if he wants to talk, he has to speak softly in order not to disturb other people who are busy either performing the prayers or other acts of devotion. In regard to refraining from talking loudly in the mosque, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

When fifteen habits“

p: ۲۵۶

become prevalent in my community, disaster afflicts them. One of those habits is talking loudly in the mosque…”(۱)

۲. Refraining from false and frivolous conversation

The mosque is the house of Allah and a place of worship and it is blameworthy to embark upon false and vain talk in the mosque because this is a kind of disrespect to the mosque and failure to observe its status. It is like a person who goes to visit someone and embarks upon praising the enemies of his host or brings up topics which hurt the host, or he undertakes other acts that do not please his host.

Without the least doubt, this is opposed to the proper rules of behavior and humanity. A visitor has to observe and respect the rights of the host and behave in a manner which pleases him. Allah is not pleased by his servants discussing topics and matters which are harmful and endanger their prosperity. In addition, doing deeds which are vain and discussing vain things in the mosque results in the prestige, honor and philosophy of the existence of mosques being forgotten because when people sit in the mosque for the purpose of uttering futile words, they forget they are in the mosque and the important reason they are there.

۳. Abstaining from buying and selling in the mosque

Buying and selling in the mosque and also deeds which are construed as professions

and careers such as blacksmithing, carpentry and cosmetology as well as other jobs are forbidden in the mosque. It has been narrated in a hadith that Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) :stated

Do“

p: ۲۵۷

Tuhaf al-‘Uqul, p. ۵۲, section [bab] on the Maxims of the Noble Prophet (S) [mawa‘iz -۱ .[al-nabi wa hikmah

(not allow your mosques to become places of buying and selling…”(۱

The bazaar is a place for business—buying and selling and engaging in professions and careers—which the society needs, but the mosque is especially reserved for worship. Worldly activities like buying and selling must not take place in them. It is natural that if a mosque also becomes a place of buying and selling as well as other transactions, it loses its feature of being a reminder and prompter [about Allah] and not only would it not remind man about Allah, but it would make him more attentive to .the world and the acquisition of income

The mosque is a place of invocation and remembrance of Allah, the Exalted, and Islam emphasizes the point that this holy place must not be used for any activity that diverts the attention to anything other than Allah so that the ground for invocation and spiritual service is completely prepared. Therefore, it is forbidden to do activities which have professional or career aspects such as computing and carpentry in a :mosque. It has been narrated in a hadith that

The Prophet of Allah found a man sharpening his spears in the mosque and stopped“ (him from doing so. He stated, ‘The mosque was not built for such deeds’.”(۲

:Also, Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) states

Amir al-Mu’minin (‘a) drove a barber who was busy with hairdressing out the mosque“ (with a whip.”(۳

Abstaining from frivolous deeds in the mosque .۴

The Noble Prophet (S) states that one must not utter vain and inappropriate words nor perform frivolous deeds while in

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.Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ۳, p. ۵۰۷ -۱

.Ibid., p. ۴۹۶ -۲

.Ibid., p. ۵۱۵ -۳

the mosque. One must behave well in order to please Allah, the Exalted, and earn divine reward and perfection. One must refrain from all deeds which have no benefit in the mosque, and in addition refrain from futile words and deeds in all places :because among the attributes of a believer is that he abstains from frivolous deeds

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ * الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِی صَلاَتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ * وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ

Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers and avoid what" (is vain."(۱

The believer should avoid frivolous deeds altogether and not let his life pass in vain, but because the majority of people do such deeds to a greater or lesser extent, or at least do neutral deeds [mubah] which have no benefit for them, a person should at least try to abstain from doing such deeds in the mosque and set the mosque particularly for worship so that the honor of the mosque is preserved and a person derives more spiritual benefit from it and also so that the role of the mosque as a .reminder and guide towards Allah is preserved

In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states that people will blame only themselves on the Day of Resurrection if they do not observe the correct rules of conduct in the mosque. That day man will realize with regret what great benefit he could have derived from the mosque. Every person could have made the most of those very moments when he was seated

.Surat al-Mu’minun ۲۳:۱-۳ -۱

in the mosque to cultivate his hereafter, but alas not only did he not derive benefit, on the contrary, he may have performed deeds which ruined his hereafter. At that time, .man will be overcome with indescribable regret

Virtues of Being Present in the Mosque for Worship

O Abu Dharr! Every breath that you take earns a higher level in paradise for as long“ ”.as you are in a mosque

After we have left our homes, gone to the mosque, observed correct rules of conduct and performed our prayers, we are still encouraged to stay in the mosque and not immediately leave after our prayers. We should try to stay longer because for as long as we are in the mosque, Allah grants a higher level for every breath that we take. If we recite the Qur’an, supplicate Allah, and worship or prostrate to Allah, we attain the divine reward for these deeds and in addition to that, mere breathing in the mosque results in Allah granting us higher levels in paradise for the reason that this breathing was done with the intention of obeying Allah and was done because we remained in the mosque with the intention of pleasing Allah and every deed which is done with the intention of pleasing Allah and glorifying him is considered to be worship and every kind of worship results in earning a higher level in the garden of eternal bliss. However, we have to bear in mind that the divine reward is granted to us as we ,breathe at the time of worshiping

.not when we breathe as we discuss worldly affairs in the mosque

It has been said that staying in the mosque and breathing there is recommended [mustahabb] and has divine reward, but this does not mean that we have to forsake all affairs and duties and take recluse in the mosque. It is possible that there arises a situation where two recommended deeds occur simultaneously and get in the way of

one another; in this case, we should select that deed which is recommended more .than the other

Sometimes, it is likely that an obligatory deed coincides with a recommended deed; in this case, we must select and discharge the obligatory deed and give up the recommended deed. For this reason, although it has been advised to discharge recommended deeds as much as possible, it does not mean if it occurs synchronously with an obligatory deed that we should forgo the obligatory deed and perform the .recommended one

When we mean to encourage a deed and mention its goodness, that goodness is for that deed in itself; that is to say, without any coincidence and concurrence with another deed. Therefore, it is likely for a statement or explanation about a particular type of worship to have an apparent generalized meaning, but based upon its coincidence with another kind of worship or an obligatory deed in a specific case, a .recommended deed loses its desirability and ought not to be performed

Therefore, if it has been recommended that we should try to stay

p: ۲۶۱

in mosque, it does not mean that we have to forsake our studies as well as academic discussion and other more necessary duties and spend our days in the mosque to invoke Allah. We cannot forsake obligatory lessons and academic discussion for the sake of staying in the mosque or reciting recommended invocations and performing recommended acts of worship because these cannot take the place of lessons and academic discussion and a recommended deed can never take the place of an obligatory deed. Compulsory duties have much more significance and we cannot give .them up on the pretext of sitting in the mosque and reciting invocations

And the angels send blessings upon you and record ten good deeds for every breath“ ”.that you take and wipe out ten sins from you

That which has been mentioned is the benefit of sitting in the mosque because the

mosque is a place of spiritual service where man is attentive to Allah. It is for this reason that in the hadiths the mosque has been introduced as the marketplace of the hereafter and it has been emphasized that man has to try to enter the mosque before .everyone else and leave it after everyone else has left

The Noble Prophet (S) asked Gabriel, 'Which place is more beloved in the eyes of" Allah?' Gabriel responded, 'The mosque, and the most beloved person is the one who (enters the mosque before everyone else and leaves it after everyone else'."(۱

O Abu Dharr! Do you know for what instance"

.Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ۱۲, p. ۳۴۵ -۱

the following verse was revealed? 'O you who have faith! Be patient, stand firm and close your ranks, and be wary of Allah so that you may be felicitous.'(۱) I said, 'No, may my father and mother be thy ransom.' The Noble Prophet (S) stated, 'It was ".'revealed in regard to waiting for prayer after prayer

The Most Beloved Servants of Allah

:In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Allah, the Exalted, states, 'My most beloved servants are those who" love and cherish one another; those whose hearts are attached to the mosque and engage in seeking forgiveness at dawn. Those are people on account of whom I ".'desist from afflicting the dwellers of the earth with divine retribution

Allah, the Exalted, removes affliction and divine retribution from the society on account of His most beloved servants whose hearts are attached to the mosque and are always waiting to go to the mosque to engage in invocation of Allah in the midst of the night. On the Day of Resurrection, these beloved servants will attain high ranks and uncountable divine rewards in paradise, but one of the effects of their presence .in the society is that they repel divine affliction

The benefit and reward that is earned by man due to affection with going to the mosque is not confined only to divine reward that will be granted to him in the other world. In this very world, too, the believer earns a great deal of ethical, scientific, instructional, social, political and material benefits and rewards. In

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.Surat Al 'Imran ۳:۲۰۰ -۱

regard to some of the invaluable and constructive benefits of going to the mosque, :Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) states

At least) one of the following eight benefits is earned by a person who frequently)" goes to the mosque: ۱) a believing brother seeking the course of Allah derives benefit from him; ۲) he learns new things; ۳) he understands verses of the Qur'an; ۴) he listens to speeches which guide him to the truth; ۵) he gains the mercy which he awaits from Allah; ۶) he listens to sermons which protect him from being misled towards perdition; ۷) he refrains from sin due to a pious and fearful spirit which permeates his heart as a result of frequently going to the mosque; ۸) he abstains from sin due to modesty felt before his believing brothers whom he has become (acquainted with in the mosque."(۱

:At the end of this section, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Sitting in the mosque is not beneficial except in three states: performing" the prayers while reciting the Gracious Qur'an, remembering Allah while reciting ".invocations and when engaged in learning

All emphasis and recommendation on going to the mosque frequently and enumerating the spiritual effects and material benefits of being present in the mosque and also enumerating the divine rewards of the soul which man earns as a result of being in the mosque is meant to encourage man to set the mosque as the center of his relationship with Allah and a place for the acquisition of

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۸۳, p. ۳۵۱ -۱

spirituality and use of the mosque for his spiritual perfection and prosperity; however, if a deed is not related to the hereafter, man must refrain from performing it in a mosque. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) divides positive deeds which are befitting of the mosque into three areas and considers performance of other :actions in the mosque to be null and void

a) Man has to be busy performing prayers during which or after which he should .recite the Qur'an

b) Invoking Allah, the Exalted, with his tongue and/or in the heart and he should set his .attention on Allah

c) In the mosque one should be occupied with learning sciences and culture and the mosque should be the centre of propagating knowledge and spreading awareness in .which case spiritual levels raise and become a cause of eternal bliss

With regard to this section and what the Noble Prophet (S) has said in connection with the significance of the mosque as well as the need to frequently go to them and the virtues of worship as well as spending time in the mosque and the need to make the best use of our time while in a mosque, and the need to grant more significance to the mosque, this House of Allah, and try to make the mosques thrive and develop and fear lest the mosques complain on the Day of Resurrection on account of our :inattention to them, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) has said

The mosques complained about those neighbors"

of yours who do not go to the mosque. Allah sent down inspiration, 'I swear upon My honor and glory, I will not accept even one cycle [rak'at] of prayer from them and I will not establish justice among them. My mercy will not encompass them and in heaven

(they will not be near Me nor be My neighbors."(۱)

Lesson ۳۵: The Status Of Piety, Asceticism and Self-discipline

point

The fulcrum of this section of the Noble Prophet's (S) words is piety [taqwa]. There has been a great deal of discussion in various cases and ethical books in regard to piety, and we too have discussed this topic a lot. In this section, we will embark upon explaining and discussing the words of the Noble Prophet (S) and some of the basic and fundamental issues which are related to piety but, to begin with, we will explain the concept of piety.

The Concept of Piety and Its Relationship with Divine Fear [Khawf]

The word 'taqwa' literally means protecting or guarding oneself from danger and it does not make any difference what that danger might be, but when the word taqwa is employed in ethical or Qur'anic discussions it does not mean protecting oneself from every kind of danger; in fact, it denotes danger which is directed at man's prosperity and hereafter although in the Qur'an, as well, taqwa has been employed to mean guarding oneself from the danger which other human beings direct at an individual:

لاَ يَتَّخِذْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللّهِ فِی شَیْءٍ إِلاَّ أَنْ تَتَّقُوا مِنْهُمْ تُقَاةً...

"The faithful should not take

۱- Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ۳, p. ۴۷۹.

the faithless for allies instead of the faithful, and whoever does this he shall have nothing of (the guardianship of) Allah, but you should guard yourselves against them, guarding carefully..."(۱)

Even so, when discussion concerns 'taqwa' or the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths regard piety and the pious, the purport is piety before Allah and the discussion

concerns people who fear danger in regard to their religious and spiritual affairs and try to protect themselves from danger because they have fear in regard to their religion. Therefore, the fountainhead of piety [taqwa] is fear and dread of danger and after feeling fear and dread, man takes action to remain safe from or at least stay far .from danger

In the Qur'an, sometimes the Day of Resurrection has been mentioned as pertaining to piety because on that day the dangers and results of reprehensible deeds will :become apparent. In this regard, Allah, the Exalted, states

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْماً لَا تَجْزِى نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئاً ...

And be on your guard against the Day when no soul shall compensate for another" (soul in the least."(٢

And sometimes someone has been mentioned pertaining to piety because He :punishes man for the sins which he commits, for instance

... وَاتَّقُوا اللّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

(And be wary of (your duty to) Allah, and know that Allah is with the pious."(٣"

This means that one must fear the danger arising from divine retribution that will be directed at him. For this reason, fear of Allah means fearing the

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١- Surat Al 'Imran ٣:٢٨.
٢- Surat al-Baqarah ٢:١٢٣.
٣- Surat al-Baqarah ٢:١٩۴.

.punishment which derives from man's reprehensible deeds

In any case, in regard to the meaning of piety [taqwa], fear [khawf] is implicitly implied in its meaning on account of its origin, and for this reason it can also interpreted as fear of Allah. Sometimes, piety refers to a habit or second nature which arises in man

as a result of repeated abstinence and refraining from sin. When man abstains from sin once, it is not said that he is pious.

However, when he constantly abstains from sin so much so that keeping aloof from sin becomes his habit and second nature, others say that he is pious. For this reason, sometimes piety is applied to the fountainhead of a deed, which is fear of Allah, and sometimes it is applied to a spiritual and divine state which arises in man as a result of repeated abstinence from sin.

Imam 'Ali ('a) defines piety [taqwa] as a spiritual and divine state which prevents man from sin and deviation and counts fear of Allah as one of its effects:

"O creatures of Allah! Certainly piety has saved the lovers of Allah from committing the unlawful and put His dread in their hearts so that their nights are passed in wakefulness and their days in thirst. Therefore, they achieve comfort through trouble and abundant watering through thirst. They regarded death to be near, so hastened towards (good) actions. They rejected their desires and kept death in sight."(١)

Elsewhere, he states:

"The responsibility for what I say is guaranteed

١- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ٣۵٣, sermon [khutbah] ١١٣, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

and I am answerable for it. If a person takes past experience (given by Allah to peoples) as a mirror for the future, he is prevented by piety from falling into doubtful actions."(١)

Indeed, piety is the greatest asset which helps man seek the path of prosperity as he traverses the course of life which is filled with fears and hazards. Piety aids man on this sea full of dangerous and turbulent storms with horrendous waves of affliction and sin. Without piety man cannot traverse this way.

point

The significance of piety and the amount of emphasis which has been laid on it makes it clear that fundamentally religion, the sending of prophets and revealing of divine books have been so that human beings can find the way toward salvation and prosperity as well as traverse that path with diligent endeavor to attain the original .goal of creation which is infinite divine mercy in the hereafter

Therefore, the more effective piety is in attaining this goal, the more significant it is. In other words, because the reality of the prophetic mission and divine legal codes is showing mankind the way of salvation and prosperity and Allah, the Exalted, on account of His infinite mercy, has made it incumbent upon Himself to guide people, in the divine verses and that which has reached people by means of the saints [awliya'] of Allah, effort has been made to train people in such a way that they act upon divine instructions, and because man's deeds often

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۱- .Ibid., p. ۶۶, sermon [khutbah] ۱۶, trans. Fayd al-Islam

spring from sensual origins, that is to say, man's volitional deeds often arise from his desire and the bulk of his will is found in fear and hope, the prophets ('a) and their successors have made use of the method of awakening fear and hope in man and .making him aware of the true goal of his creation

After understanding the notion of piety [taqwa] and its significance, it is necessary to understand the ways of obtaining piety. We will briefly mention three ways of :attaining piety

One's attitude about the future .۱

With attention to the fact that piety is the main provision for man's eternal life, love of the self by way of foresight and the intellect's judgment that man has to struggle for

his future and attain that which is beneficial for his eternal life should be awakened. :The Qur'an states

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

O you who have faith! Be wary of (your duty to) Allah, and let every soul consider" what it sends ahead for tomorrow and be wary of (your duty to) Allah. Allah is indeed (well aware of what you do."(١

Attention to knowledge and awareness of Allah in regard to deeds and conduct .٢

:This method has also been mentioned in the above verse

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

".And be wary of (your duty to) Allah. Allah is indeed well aware of what you do..."

That is to say, in regard to Allah's attribute of knowing whatever you do, fear Him and have piety. This is another method of instruction

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.Surat al-Hashr ٥٩:١٨ -١

which Allah has chosen to help man to acquire piety because people have special psychological characteristics and one of these is that when one knows and pays heed to the fact that there is someone watching his deeds and Allah sees whatever he does and is aware of his good as well as bad acts, he refrains from doing objectionable .deeds

In reality, Allah has created man in such a way that he feels ashamed to do bad deeds in the presence of someone who knows the deed is bad. For this reason, if man constantly reflects on the fact that he is in the presence of Allah and that not only are the outward aspects of his deeds being witnessed but Allah is also aware of that which is in his heart, he feels ashamed of even the corrupt thoughts and fantasies .which arise in heart

The more man respects someone as great, the more he desires to be cleaner and purer in the eyes of that person. In other words, he wants his personality to be respected. In regard to Allah's awareness of the deeds of man, the Glorious Qur'an :states

أَوَلَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ

Do they not know that Allah knows whatever they hide and whatever they" (disclose?"(۱

Realization that piety is beneficial even in the world .۳

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا * وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ...

And whoever is careful of (his duty to) Allah, He shall make a way out for him from" (whence he shall not reckon..."(۲

And also

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۷۷ -۱
.Surat al-Talaq ۶۵:۲-۳ -۲

:Imam 'Ali ('a) states

Know that whoever adopts piety and fears Allah, Allah will show him the way out of" (sedition and corruption and the way leading from the darkness to the light."(۱

In the first way of attaining piety [taqwa], we have been told to think about what we are saving for tomorrow. In this method, it is said that one has to reflect about the benefits piety has for one in this world. In the entire course of one's life, whether we like it or not, we are afflicted by seditions, sorrows, troubles and obscurities. If we want Allah to help right in this world and liberate us from wandering and .predicaments, we must adopt piety

In places where a pious man has to ascertain and discern the way, Allah grants him a light which makes everything manifest so that he may see the correct path. It is for this reason that sometimes we see very complicated and puzzling problems occur which cannot be solved by people with strong minds and sharp intellects whereas people lacking strong minds and intellects can solve such problems with the help of Allah because they have adopted a pious life. In reality, it is the help and aid of Allah .which helps some of his servants who have adopted piety

Therefore, one of the ways to encourage people to attain piety is introducing the positive effects which result from it because man is often only prepared to act on something or avoid what he loves when

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۶۰۲, sermon [khutbah] ۱۸۲, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

he knows that doing so makes him attain good results. Therefore, if we want to encourage other people to attain high values and to refrain from things which have spiritual harm for their hereafter, we have to do something which incites motivation in them. In order for people to overlook the pleasures of sin, they need to have .motivation

In order for them to easily wake up at night for the sake of worship, they have to have motivation. When the call of duty necessitates that they have to go to the battlefield and put their lives at risk as well as perform other good deeds for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, a person has to have motivation and the best way to incite motivation in him is to make him realize the benefits and good effects which result .from his deeds because man's natural disposition seeks those effects

Man, at whatever level of knowledge and faith, seeks goodness and, if his knowledge and faith are weak, he at least desires the good of the world. All people want abundant and lawful sustenance, and they want to earn it without exerting a great deal of effort. It is for this reason that one of the methods that has been employed in the Glorious Qur'an and also in hadiths to encourage piety is mentioning the worldly

.benefits of piety

One of these benefits is that if a person is pious, Allah, the Exalted, shows him the way to escape and free

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himself from hardships and problems because sometimes a person finds himself in an impossible situation with no means of escape and does not see any solution for his problems and becomes obliged to bear with patience the bitterness and hardships of .life

Allah, the Exalted, promises that if a person has piety, the way of deliverance from hardships and problems will be made available. This is a very great promise which Allah gives to man and encourages him to choose a way whose fruits and results will .be liberation from hardships and problems

During the period of the struggles of the Muslim people of Iran and the Islamic movement, sometimes very hard conditions would arise and no one knew the way of rescue from those conditions, but because this revolution was founded on the basis of piety and for the sake of spreading divine piety in the Islamic society and bringing about a spirit of servitude and the rule of Allah, Allah would grant His assistance and inspire the way of deliverance at every juncture and in the end the people would find a way out of the hardships. An example of this is the twenty second day of the month (of Bahman:(۱

When the satanic regime announced martial law and fiercely stopped the people from coming out of their homes in order to execute its satanic plans, Imam Khomeini (may Allah be pleased with him) with his foresight and sharp-sightedness and, without the least doubt, divine inspiration, ordered the people to

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The eleventh month of the Iranian calendar; the Iranian Islamic Revolution took -۱

.place in Bahman ۲۲nd, ۱۳۵۷ AHS

overlook and turn a blind eye to the military government and come out of their homes to occupy the streets and as a result of this the enemy's conspiracy was frustrated .and the victory of the revolution became certain

If Allah, the Exalted, invites us to acquire piety, it is because in this way we attain great results and benefits both in this world and in the hereafter. We attain high levels in heaven and spiritual perfection in the hereafter and also worldly good, but Allah :does not derive any benefit from our piety

لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهَ لُحُومُهَا وَلاَ دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَى مِنكُمْ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

It is not their flesh or their blood that reaches Allah. Rather it is the piety that reaches" Him. Thus, has He disposed them for your benefit so that you may magnify Allah for (His guiding you, and give good news to the virtuous."(۱

What connects us to Allah is piety which is the cause of our perfection and ascendancy and because Allah wants us to attain perfection, He encourages us to endeavor at attaining piety by enumerating the benefits of piety in this world so that in the end we may also attain heavenly reward. In reality, He enumerates for us the sensible and readily available advantages of piety in order to encourage us to attain piety even if the reality is that heavenly rewards are not, as we wrongly imagine, on credit and their occurrence is near

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.Surat al-Hajj ۲۲:۳۷ -۱

.and certain but we do not conceive them as such

A Glance at the Levels of Piety

Keeping in mind that all spiritual perfections have levels, piety, being one of the highest spiritual perfections, has various gradations also. From one perspective

:scholars of ethics have mentioned three stages of piety

۱. Protecting the soul from the punishment of hell and from living in eternal divine retribution by doing commendable deeds and having correct beliefs: this is because piety connotes safeguarding the soul and preventing oneself from opposing Allah and does not only mean abstaining from sin. It is for this reason that piety pertains both to the beliefs and to other than the beliefs.

Piety in regard to the beliefs denotes that man has to meditate about the fundamentals of belief and not deviate from them and endeavor to be honest and firm both in words as well as action in regard to beliefs. Man has to truly become faithful to his Lord and have certainty that the other unreal gods and objects of worship are false. He has to truly believe all existents are creations of the real Object of Worship and a created thing must be submissive and obedient to its Object of Worship and prostrate on the ground in humility to Him and never turn his back on Him.

After observing piety in relation to Allah, the Exalted, he also has to abide by piety in regard to the prophets and their successors too and willingly follow their orders with all his heart and soul.

۲. The second level

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of piety is that, in addition to renunciation of sin, man also has to abstain from dubious and objectionable acts [makruh] even though they are not considered to be sins and are not punishable.

۳. The third level of piety is that in addition to protecting the body parts and limbs from forbidden [muharramat], objectionable [makruhat] and dubious acts [mushtabahat], man must guard the heart from that which is not pleasing to Allah and also not think about sin and disagreeable deeds but try to reflect about Allah and that which is pleasing to Him.

It is natural that no matter how much one worships, he will not derive any benefit from his acts of devotion if he does not pay a blind eye to sin. Therefore, in order for us to derive benefit from our acts of worship, we first of all have to protect their bounds and limits and refrain from deeds that are displeasing to Allah. It has been :narrated in a hadith that

One who refrains from forbidden things [muharramat] is the most virtuous of“ (people.”(۱

A Glance at the Effects of Piety

point

Another issue that is worth dealing with is the effects of piety. Some of these effects :include

The effects and role of piety in the perception of truths .۱

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَاناً...

O you who have faith! If you are wary of Allah, He shall appoint a criterion(۲) for“ (you...”(۳

The faculty of cogitation which makes us aware of realities becomes sharper and works better when one does not act in an unrestricted and immoral way and observes correct standards of

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۷, p. ۶۴ -۱
.That is, knowledge that will enable one to distinguish between truth and falsehood -۲
.Surat al-Anfal ۸:۲۹ -۳

behavior because perversion inhibits the intellect from functioning correctly. In more technical terms, the origin of unrestrictedness is in the animal instincts, whether in regard to food or sexual matters or whether related to the faculty of anger, and if a

person does not recognize any bounds and limits in regard to these aspects, he .strengthens them

A person, whose devotion is to food, is like a sheep whose only concern is herbage. Without the least doubt, such a person cannot manage to bolster his more human aspects and intellection is one of the human faculties which, in the case of becoming overly devoted to food, becomes either weak or suspended. In the same way, the thoughts and activities of a human being whose preoccupation is sexual passion revolve around his lusts and he is like a animal immersed in passion from morning .until night

Such a human being chases after scenes which serve his passions and hears and speaks words which only serve his animal instincts. This person only studies books which discuss carnal issues and pleasures of the flesh. Without the least doubt, such a person cannot be expected to reflect about divine knowledge, to conceive the truth and distinguish right from wrong. In the same way, a person who is like a predator only strives to strengthen his faculty of anger and his only concern is domination and subjugation of other people. For this reason, the focal point of such a man's thoughts is his animal instinct of

.subjugation and domination

The exigency of piety is that man ought to control his animal faculties and in this case the faculty of rationalization and intellection controls and reigns. Now, if the meaning of furqan (criterion) in the above-quoted verse is the intellect—because the intellect distinguishes between right and falsehood—we infer that by restricting the control of animal instincts and letting the faculty of thought take charge of affairs, and by subjugating the rest of the faculties by means of the intellect, we will attain the .criterion

The other possible interpretation of furqan (criterion) is that furqan is the light higher than the intellect because the intellect exists in all human beings; it exists more in

some people and less in others. Therefore, by knowing Allah and having divine fear [khawf], man observes bounds and limits in his life and with the help of the piety which appears in him, he attains the aptitude for Allah to grant him the light of the criterion [furqan] which is a confirmer of the faculty of intellection.

۲. The role of piety in clear-sightedness

There are a great deal of Qur'anic verses and hadiths which denote the fact that one of the invaluable benefits of divine piety is clear-sightedness and the opening up of apertures of knowledge for man. In this regard, Allah, the Exalted, states:

... وَاتَّقُوا اللّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللّهُ...

"...And be careful of (your duty to) Allah and Allah shall teach you..."(۱)

This verse emphasizes this point that piety is very effective in increasing knowledge and awareness which comes from Allah, the Exalted.

In

۱- Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۸۲.

a hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"Springs of wisdom flow from the heart onto the tongue of a person who for forty days sincerely purifies himself for Allah."(۱)

In reality piety wipes out the rust covering the heart of man and removes the curtains and veils which the devil have established over man's heart and then man perceives true knowledge clearly. Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"If it were not for the devils which constantly move around the hearts of the children of Adam, they would witness the spiritual realm of the heavens."(۲)

There are many such sayings in our religious manuscripts and they indicate the fact

that piety and purity are effective for spiritual insight and foresight and indirectly warn us that worshiping the soul and losing the reins of piety result in the darkening of .the soul and dullness of the heart and diminish spiritual insight

The role of piety in captivating and securing the love of Allah .۳

بَلَى مَنْ أَوْفَى بِعَهْدِهِ وَاتَّقَى فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

Yes, whoever fulfills his commitments and guards (against evil)—Allah indeed loves“ (the pious.”(۳

It is clear what benefits will be directed at the person whom Allah loves. Once man loves some individual, he always tries to win their pleasure and he is not remiss in this .regard and tries to do what the other person desires at whatever cost

Now, when Allah who is the Almighty, has all perfections and is All-powerful loves someone it is clear what He can do for that person. Often times, we love someone and we would like to do something good for him

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۰, p. ۲۴ -۱
.Ibid., vol. ۵۹, p. ۱۶۳ -۲
.Surat Al ‘Imran ۳:۷۶ -۳

but we are unable to on account of lacking facilities and means. However, Allah, the Exalted, is able to do all that He wishes and all things are within His will and power and .He can do whatever He wants for one He loves

Not having fear and sorrow .۴

:As Allah, the Exalted, states

... فَمَنْ اتَّقَى وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

(Then those who are pious and righteous will have no fear, nor will they grieve.”(۱...“

۵. Receiving divine help

In regard to granting invisible aid to the pious, Allah, the Exalted, states:

بَلَى إِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَيَأْتُوكُم مِنْ فَوْرِهِمْ هَذَا يُمْدِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَهِ آلافٍ مِنْ الْمَلآئِکَهِ مُسَوِّمِينَ

"Yes, if you are steadfast and pious, and should they come at you suddenly, your Lord will aid you with five thousand marked angels."(۲)

It has been narrated in a hadith:

"Verily Allah, the Honored and High, confirms the believer with His spirit and whenever the believer does good and acts piously, that spirit draws near to confirm him and it leaves him when he sins and transgresses."(۳)

۶. Acquisition of dignity and proximity [qurb] to Allah

In regard to the role of piety in man's acquisition of dignity and proximity [qurb] to Allah, the Qur'an states:

... إِنَّ أَکْرَمَکُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاکُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

"... Indeed the noblest(۴) of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious among you. Indeed Allah is All-knowing, All-aware."(۵)

۷. Deliverance from problems and hardships

In regard to the role and effects of piety in delivering man from problems and hardships, there is much discussion and verse twelve of Surat al-Talaq has been quoted. Here we will quote another verse which is related

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۱- Surat al-A'raf ۷:۳۵.

۲- Surat Al 'Imran ۳:۱۲۵.

۳- Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ۱۱, p. ۲۳۵.

۴- Or: 'the most honored'.

.Surat al-Hujurat ۴۹:۱۳ -۵

:to a pious society

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَى آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَرَكَاتٍ مِن السَّمَاء وَالأَرْضِ ...

If the people of the towns had been faithful and pious, We would have opened to“ (them blessings from the heaven and the earth.”(۱

The acceptance of deeds .۸

In regard to the role and effects of piety in making man’s deeds acceptable, Allah, the :Exalted, states

... إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللّهُ مِن الْمُتَّقِينَ

(Allah accepts only from the pious.”(۲...“

In this verse Allah, the Exalted, makes us aware of the point that if we want our deeds to be accepted, we have to have piety. Of course, if we discharge our religious and obligatory duties by observing their correct outward conditions, we are no longer .’duty-bound to discharge ‘divine duties

For instance, if out of laziness we hurriedly perform our morning prayer after the sky has become bright before the rising of the sun, we are not duty-bound to perform the compensational morning prayers but the fulfillment of our duty does not imply that our deed has risen to the level of acceptance and the level of acceptance of duty is higher and has its own special qualities one of which is the act accompanied by piety. Therefore, that effect which brings about loftiness of deeds (acceptance of deeds) in .the eyes of Allah is piety and abstinence from opposing Allah

O Abu Dharr! Strive harder for piety rather than only performing deeds because an“ action done with piety is not insignificant. How can a deed which is accepted by Allah ?be insignificant

.Surat al-A'raf ۷:۹۶ -۱
.Surat al-Ma'idah ۵:۲۷ -۲

".'Allah, the Exalted, states, 'Allah accepts only from the pious

Whether in regard to the world or in regard to the hereafter, people do not strive with the same ambition and there are a lot of differences among them. In regard to the sustenance of life, some have few aspirations and exert effort from morning to night .just for the sake of earning bread and butter and they are content with just that

It is not true that this group of people has selected the course of abstinence, but their expectations are few and their ambitions are limited. Some people have higher ambitions and they are not content with less and strive to earn enormous benefits in this world and limited things do not content them. Other people have even higher aspirations than this group and they do not pay any heed to material and sensual .benefits such as food and the stomach

For them, what is important is attaining social position, honor and dignity. If they choose to do something, it is not with the intention of acquiring a lot of money, but because a certain job is suitable to their status and circumstances and results in granting honor and dignity to them. They do not do work that is not suitable even if they would earn more money from it. The ambitions of this group of people are high .and dignity and honor is valuable for them

Likewise, in regard to the hereafter, believers have different ambitions. Some only aspire

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to be saved from hell and are only content with being redeemed. Some people are not content with this and seek to attain various levels of paradise. Some others have such high ambitions that they do not even look at hell and heaven but aspire to be beloved .of Allah, the Exalted, and gain proximity to Him

Indeed, those who have known Allah and have knowledge of the high value of honor

before Him would be pleased and happy with this honor even if heaven and its blessings did not exist. The important for them is that Allah grants them merit and honor and they do not lay any importance upon the blessings of paradise. In the :Qur'an, Allah, the Exalted, states

... إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ...

Indeed the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious among..." (you..."(۱

Allah does not state that paradise and its blessings are granted to the most pious among you or that such a person is delivered from the fire of hell, but He states that the pious has attained nobility and honor before Allah and is valuable in the sight of Allah. It becomes clear that earning the honor of Allah and becoming beloved in the sight of Allah is higher than deriving benefit from heaven and its palaces and eternal .favors

Now, how can such an individual who has attained this level of knowledge and awareness be encouraged to attain more piety? Can it be said to him that you

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۱- Surat al-Hujurat ۴۹:۱۳.

have to increase your piety so as to earn more worldly reward? This human being has .put all these things aside and attained higher levels

Can it be said to him that you ought to increase your piety so as to derive benefit from the palaces of paradise and its pure virgin women as well as be delivered from hell? It is obvious that not one of these things will motivate him to increase his piety because .he has already turned a blind eye to all of them

He has reached a level of perfection and completion and his aspiration has reached its peak such that he desires nothing but the beatific vision [liqa' Allah] of Allah and winning divine love and honor. The only thing which can encourage such a person to

increase his piety is the promise of meeting his Lord and attaining the pleasure of the .Beloved

We have to bear in mind that the Gracious Qur'an has not chosen one method of training people, but it has advanced a particular method suitable for every type of person. It is for this reason that the Glorious Qur'an has various methods of instruction which are not confined to the saints [awliya'] of Allah and those who have attained high levels because the Qur'an is a book of guidance and invites all human .beings to perfection and edification of character

For this reason, it has also mentioned benefits and set forth rewards for people who have a lower level of

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ambition and are traversing the course of perfection so that they may not remain without any benefits. It has promised them material benefits, paradise and deliverance from hell but the promise of divine honor and attaining the pleasure of Allah and becoming beloved by Him is offered to those who have reached perfected .levels of knowledge

The Quality of Accountability and Other Characteristics of the Pious

Another subject worth discussing is the attributes of the pious. After comprehending the greatness and value of piety, we have to know the qualities of the pious so as to :learn the way of attaining piety. In this regard the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! No man is considered pious until he takes an account of himself more" strictly than a partner who is accounting for his partner in order to find out by what means that which he eats, drinks and wears is acquired. Is it earned in a legitimate "?[halal] or illegitimate [haram] way

The Noble Prophet (S) regards the attribute of accountability as one of the qualities of the pious and states that a pious person is one who is not indifferent and negligent and holds himself accountable. If he acquires food, he observes whether he has

acquired it in a legitimate or illegitimate way. If he acquires clothes, he is careful of where the money for buying those clothes comes from. Likewise, he considers and examines his incentive for acquiring a house—is it for him to better serve Allah, prepare more comfort for his household, engage in spiritual devotion in a

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better way as well as be able to bring up his children in a good environment or does he ?acquire a house in order to boast to other people and show off to them

When he intends to spend his money, he considers whether Allah will be pleased or not and also whether there is another more obligatory duty for which he can spend his money. In any case, he weighs all aspects and holds himself accountable. A person ought not to be such that he gains money from whatever source and spends it on every whim and fancy. He has to observe whether the facilities he brings to hand are earned in a legitimate way or not. If they are earned illicitly, he has to return them to .where they belong and not cause himself problems

Sometimes, a person becomes so corrupted by the world and entangles himself to such an extent in worldly affairs that he cannot liberate himself later. He becomes so preoccupied with seeking opportunities and enormous wealth that he even sells his dignity to acquire things, not caring who or what is sacrificed along the way. He does .not care in what manner he earns his money

If we have not attained high levels of piety so as to abstain from dubious [mushtabah] and reprehensible [makruh] acts, then at least we ought to refrain from forbidden [haram] things and observe the bounds and limits of halal and haram lest there is someone else's right in the money we

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bring to hand. Every believer has certain bounds which he must not transgress. A butcher has to observe certain divine laws and a civil servant follows other laws and .all people must see to it that other people's rights are not trampled underfoot

A worker has to be sure that he fulfills his duties during working hours and does not engage in leisure activities and smoking cigarettes as well as talking to this and that other worker. Some believers are very diligent in their acts of worship and imagine that merely worshipping and keeping vigil at night is enough for them and when they are in their offices, they content themselves with only sitting behind their desk and not .working because they imagine that keeping vigil at night compensates for laziness

Government workers and those working for the private sector have to know that their working hours belong to their employers and they do not have the right to use that time for personal purposes. Even the telephones that are in their offices cannot be .exploited for personal use. Unfortunately, we do not pay heed to these points

Likewise, using money from the public treasury must only be used for public purposes and in the public interest. Therefore, if we are obliged to be working during certain specified hours, we have to be careful not to spend those hours for personal purposes. When we have been hired to do a certain job, we have no right even to perform prayers unless

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we initially agree on this condition with our employer and we have his permission to .do so

In addition, any money which is earned by means of assassinating the characters of .other people or by means of flattery and bootlicking is illicit

:In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Allah does not take notice of where in hell He casts a man who does not" ".take notice of how he earns his living

Man has to be cautious and observe the method by which he earns his income and reflect on where his income comes from. He must not earn his money by means of flattering people and he must be concerned whether his assets and his work are .legitimate or not because if they are not Allah will cast him into hell

O Abu Dharr! Every person who desires to be the most honored among the people“ ”.must be pious

O Abu Dharr! The most beloved person in the sight of Allah is he who remembers“ Allah most and the most honored among you is the one who is more pious and the ”.furthest from divine retribution is the one who fears Allah more

As we have already mentioned, fear [khawf] is one of the foundations of piety and) (.without it piety is not attainable

O Abu Dharr! The pious are those who abstain from things that are not generally“ ”.abstained from, so as not to fall into dubious matters

It has been said that there are levels for piety and that some people only

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abstain from prohibited things while others go a step further and refrain from things that are doubtful as well, and still other human beings have reached such a high level that they keep aloof from objectionable [makruh] things lest they may mistakenly fall into error. Thereafter, in order to explain the superior level of piety, the Noble Prophet :(S) states

O Abu Dharr! He who obeys Allah, the Exalted, has remembered Him even though his“ ”.prayers and fasting are few and he recites the Qur’an little

(Self–restraint and Asceticism in the Words of the Noble Prophet (S

:Thereafter, in regard to self-discipline, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! The foundation of religion is self-restraint [wara‘]—restraining from sin“ and dubious matters—and its pinnacle is obedience to Allah. O Abu Dharr! Engage in self-restraint so that you may become one of the most devout of worshippers, for the ”.best part of your religion is self-restraint

Originally, the word wara‘ had the meaning of restraining oneself from the unlawful or

avoiding the prohibited completely; then, later it was used more generally to mean self-restraint, and its meaning is very close to the meaning of piety. However, predominantly self-restraint [wara‘] is used to refer to a habit of abstinence and asceticism, which is an inner quality, while piety is more generally applied to the prerequisites of deeds, the praiseworthy deeds themselves and also to the inner .habit

In order to explain the role of wara‘ in restraining a person from sin and deviation, :Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states

There is no distinction higher than Islam; no honor more honorable than“

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(piety [taqwa]; no asylum better than self-restraint [wara‘]."(۱

:Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) states

(Adopt piety [taqwa] and protect your religion with self-restraint [wara‘]."(۲“

Restraining oneself from prohibited things is the most important factor for attaining prosperity and high spiritual levels and escaping from decadence or falling into the whirlwind of perdition. In reality, self-restraint from sins and doubtful acts is the most difficult level of worship and devotion to Allah and it is for this reason that Imam al-:Baqir (‘a) states

(Self-restraint [wara‘] is the most difficult form of worship."(۳“

Again bearing in mind the role of self-restraint in making the other constituents of :worship sound, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states

Worship which is devoid of self-restraint [wara‘] is devoid of goodness and“ (benefit."(۴

Also, regarding the necessity to accompany worship with self-restraint, the Noble :Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! The excellence of knowledge is more than the excellence of worship.“ Understand that even if you perform the prayers so much that you bend like a bow and fast so much that you become as thin as an arrow, these will not benefit you ”.unless they are accompanied by self-restraint

:He also states

O Abu Dharr! Those people who practice self-restraint and asceticism [zuhd] in the“ ”.world are truly the saints [awliya’] of Allah

Zuhd literally means lack of inclination and reluctance and is contrasted with affection, appetite and inclination to the world; that is to say, one has no inclination and .attachment to the world and is content with a simple life

It is necessary to say that asceticism and abstinence that

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۲۶, wisdom [hikmat] ۳۶۳, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱
.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۰, p. ۲۹۷ -۲
.Ibid., p. ۲۹۸ -۳
.Ibid., p. ۳۰۷ -۴

is desirable in Islam is when man adopts a life of simplicity and refrains from ostentation in order to discharge his duties better and turns a blind eye to the glamorous and glittering manifestations of life. It is self-evident that this kind of conduct is not a result of conceiving the world and its manifestations as filthy nor is it due to a conflict between the world and the hereafter and it is also not on account of .shirking social obligations

Asceticism in Islam is adopted for the sake of discharging duties in a better way, to hold sway over excessive inclinations and extreme attitudes and in order to control fondness with the world and infatuation with outward material manifestations of life. This helps restrain man’s over-desirous soul and rid a person of a state of self-loss

.vis-à-vis the manifestations of the life of this world

Therefore, asceticism in Islam is not incongruous with having wealth and power and in reality an ascetic is a person that is not in love with the outward manifestations of the world more than he loves the Truth and Allah and he does not sacrifice divine goals for the sake of worldly aims. On the contrary, he has set the hereafter as the main goal and this world as a means and pre-requisite for attaining the next.

With regard to what has been mentioned, the difference between asceticism [zuhd] and monasticism [rahbaniyyah], which is prevalent among Christians and Jews, becomes clear. Monasticism includes quitting the world

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and escaping from societal responsibility and this ideology is incongruous with the spirit of Islam.

From the viewpoint of Islam, the outward aspects of life including money, children, leadership, etc. are all means of perfection and development and are blessings of Allah and deriving appropriate benefit from them and observing balance in making use of them, in addition to bringing about prosperity in this world, generate bliss for man in the hereafter.

Correct use of the manifestations of the world means that man should not consider the world and its outward aspects to have value in and of themselves rather they are blessings that must be used for the purpose of attaining perfection and prosperity in the hereafter. Allah, the Exalted, states:

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاکَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الآخِرَةَ وَلاَ تَنْسَ نَصِيبَکَ مِن الدُّنْيَا...

"By the means of what Allah has given you, seek the abode of the hereafter, while not forgetting your share in this world…"(۱)

According to Islam, everything in the world that has acquired the color of existence is good, and Allah has not created anything bad. For this reason, neither is the world

with its manifestations bad nor is interest in them which arises from natural :tendencies that have been placed in man. The Noble Prophet (S) states

Asceticism and abstinence [zuhd] in the world does mean that you have to turn the“ halal (permitted) into haram (forbidden) for yourselves or disperse your wealth. Asceticism means that you should not rely more on what is in your hands than that

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.Surat al-Qasas ۲۸:۷۷ -۱

(which is with Allah.”(۱

:Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states

O people! Abstinence [zuhd] is to shorten the desires, to thank for bounties and to“ (avoid prohibitions [maharim]...”(۲

In addition to what has been said, the Glorious Qur’an reproaches monasticism and considers it to be an innovation which was introduced into religion as a result of the incorrect idea that there is incongruity between religion and the world. The Qur’an :states

ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلَى آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الإِنجِيلَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِى قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا فَآتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ

Then We followed them up with Our apostles and We followed [them] with Jesus son“ of Mary, and We gave him the Evangel, and We put in the hearts of those who followed him kindness and mercy. But as for monasticism, they innovated it We had not prescribed it for them—only seeking Allah’s pleasure. Yet they did not observe it with due observance. So We gave to the faithful among them their [due] reward, but (many of them are transgressors.”(۳

One day the wives of ‘Uthman ibn Maz‘un came to the Noble Prophet (S) and complained that her husband fasted all day and kept vigil all night. He also was not at

the service of his family during the day and did not sleep with his wife at night. After hearing this, the Noble Prophet (S) angrily got up and went to see 'Uthman who was busy

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.Nahj al-Fasahah, p. ۳۵۸, hadith ۱۷۱۲ -۱
.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۸۰, sermon [khutbah] ۸۰, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۲
.Surat al-Hadid ۵۷:۲۷ -۳

performing his prayers. When he saw the Noble Prophet (S), he shortened his prayer. :The Noble Prophet told him

O 'Uthman! Allah did not raise me to preach monasticism [rahbaniyyah] and shunning" the world but to preach a moderate and easy religion. I fast, pray and sleep with my (wives."(۱

(Lesson ۳۶: Forbearance, Moderateness and Trust in Allah as Stated by the Prophet (S

point

Sentences which were examined in the previous session centered on piety and self-restraint. In this section of the Noble Prophet's (S) hadith, in addition to self-restraint and abstinence, forbearance and the station of trust in Allah have also been :mentioned. The Noble Prophet (S) stated

O Abu Dharr! Whoever on the Day of Resurrection is devoid of three things is a loser."" Abu Dharr asked, "May my father and mother be sacrificed for you. What are those three things?" In response, the Noble Prophet (S) stated, "Self-restraint [wara'] with which he abstains from forbidden things, forbearance [hilm] with which he encounters ".fools, and good morals with which he coexists harmoniously with people

Self-restraint [wara'] is the first quality that will cause loss for a person on the Day of Resurrection if not obtained. In the previous section, we said that usually self-restraint is applied to a habit of piety and merely abstaining from one sin cannot be

considered to be self-restraint. The Noble Prophet's (S) expression in this section confirms that interpretation and clearly explains that self-restraint is applied to a spiritual nature or habit which inhibits man from committing sin; for this reason, the characteristic of self-restraint is that it prevents

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲۲, p. ۲۶۴ -۱

man from committing forbidden acts and it is natural that a man that is not endowed with this attribute becomes tainted by sin and consequently meets with defeat and .failure and ends up in hell

The Lofty Status of Forbearance

The second attribute that is necessary to be endowed with and protects man from loss and failure on the Day of Resurrection is forbearance [hilm]. It has been asserted that forbearance means controlling the self and not allowing incitement of the faculty of anger. Without the least doubt, patience and forbearance are commendable and invaluable attributes and can be considered to be soldiers of intellect, and anger [ghadab]—which is in opposition to forbearance [hilm]—can be considered to be a .soldier of ignorance

It is well known that man has been advised not to make decisions, discipline someone nor take action on something while in a state of anger because he will likely later regret his deeds. That is so because man's intellect does not function well when he is in a state of wrath. It has been recorded in a hadith that Qanbar was insulted by an :ignorant man and he wanted to respond when Imam 'Ali ('a) stated

O Qanbar! Ignore your defamer so that you may please Allah, the Merciful, and so" that you may anger the devil and thus punish your enemy because retribution for him is not worse than ignoring and turning a blind eye to him. I swear upon the Allah who split the seed and created human beings that a believer

does not please his Lord more than by having patience and forbearance and he does not annoy the devil more than by repressing anger and he does not punish a fool more than with silence."(1)

Elsewhere, Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"No honor is like knowledge, no power is like forbearance."(2)

With regard to the loftiness of the quality of forbearance and its invaluable role in preserving proper social relations and reciprocal respect, it is necessary for every individual in the society to be endowed with it and to strive to attain it, especially religious scholars who occupy the role of reforming and training people. When a religious scholar, who is a reformer and a guide of the people, retaliates vis-à-vis the unbecoming conduct of the ignorant, he renders his work ineffective.

Therefore, we must accompany our knowledge with forbearance in order to have a desirable outcome and be patient and enthusiastic when explaining religious truths. In regard to the fact that the viability of knowledge is not feasible without forbearance, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"I swear upon Allah in whose hands my life lies, no two things have joined and supplemented one another better than forbearance and knowledge."(3)

Truly, forbearance is in the highest category of personal perfection after knowledge and, as we have already stated, knowledge without forbearance is not beneficial. It is for this reason that in some instances when knowledge is praised, forbearance too is praised and in reality forbearance and knowledge are mentioned as two invaluable elements which are conjoined

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۱, p. ۴۲۴.

۲- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۱۳۹, wisdom [hikmat] ۱۰۹, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

۳- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲, p. ۴۶.

:and supplementary. The Noble Prophet (S) states

O my Lord! Free me from want on account of knowledge and beautify me with" (forbearance."(1

Without the least doubt a person who beautifies himself with patience and forbearance has adopted the most merciful and compassionate method in critical circumstances when enmity and hatred become inflamed in people's hearts. Forbearance helps one to extinguish the fire of hatred and enmity and does not allow the carnal self to gain control. Instead, it compels the self to extinguish the fire of .hatred

In history we observe that despite the different kinds of torture and torment which the polytheists inflicted on the Noble Prophet (S) and his companions, after the conquest of Mecca the Noble Prophet (S) displayed utmost forbearance by forgiving .the defeated polytheists

At that time, the enemies expected the Noble Prophet (S) to slaughter them and even some of the standard-bearers of Islam who were seeking revenge addressed Abu Sufiyan saying, "Today is the day of bitter fighting and revenge." However, the Noble :Prophet (S) forbade this vengeful slogan and substituted it with the motto

Today is the day of mercy and good relations. Today, Allah has granted honor to the " (Quraysh."(2

Without any doubt, man is forced by necessity to have relations with other people in his life. Allah, the Exalted, has created him is such a way that he is left with no option but to accept social life and if he wants to live alone and far from other people, he will be

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1- .Ibid., vol. ۹۷, p. ۳۶۸

2- .Ibid., vol. ۲۱, p. ۱۰۹

deprived of a great deal of the blessings of this world, he cannot progress towards .perfection and perhaps he cannot even continue living his life

For this reason, he is compelled by necessity to accept social life and have relations with other people in order to continue his life and also to seek perfection and ascendancy. On the other hand, every person is different with regard to mentality, personality, morals, understanding and knowledge and therefore people encounter others who are unwise and foolish in conduct. Sometimes, a person comes in contact .with foolish individuals whose improper behavior is insulting and demeaning

Not all people have reached the peak of human perfection and knowledge nor do they possess the intelligence to compel themselves to behave in a suitable and courteous manner. It is for this reason that sometimes a person must interact with others that are not self-built who, due to lack of knowledge or existence of family problems and pressures, behave improperly and neither observe proper rules of conduct nor .respect others

It is natural that if a person retaliates in tit for tat manner and becomes angry quickly when faced with such people, differences increase and negative consequences arise from those differences. In addition, time is wasted, the person loses his peace of mind and he cannot attain his goals in life. Therefore, in order for man to derive great benefit from the world and remain safe from its blights, he has to develop the spirit of forbearance in order

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.to control himself when faced with such people

In addition to the fact that human beings ought to practice self-restraint in order to avoid committing sin, they also have to be forbearing in order to derive benefit from social life and not create losses because if man gains distance from the society, he becomes deprived of the benefits of social life. If man wants to derive benefit from the society for the sake of securing the life of the hereafter, in order to remain sound .when confronted by unwise people, he must have self-restraint and forbearance

He has to practice forbearance so that when he is confronted by demeaning and insulting circumstances, he pays a deaf ear and turns a blind eye to them so that he can carry out his duties and derive benefit from the society and unbecoming conduct does not become a hurdle on the road to perfection. In the words of hadith: "Have ".forbearance in order to repel the ignorant

In contrast to the common impression that ignorance is only applied to a lack of acquired knowledge, ignorance is also absence of wisdom, foolishness and stupidity. For this reason, ignorance includes behaving in an unwise, foolish or senseless manner and this sense has been employed in many verses of the Qur'an. For :example

... وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّى كَيدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيهِنَّ وَأَكُنْ مِن الْجَاهِلِينَ

If You do not turn away their schemes from me, I will incline towards them and" (become one of the ignorant."(١

Yusuf (Joseph) is saying, if Allah

p: ٣٠٠

.Surat Yusuf ١٢:٣٣ -١

does not turn away the deceptive schemes of the women around him, he might commit an unwise deed. In such verses interpreting ignorance [jahl] as the lack of knowledge is incorrect and furthermore in most cases lack of knowledge is an excuse. Whereas this word is mostly used for reproach and in inexcusable instances such as :when Allah reproaches the brothers of Joseph

هَلْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ بِيوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ جاهِلُونَ

(Did you realize what you did to Joseph and his brother when you were ignorant?"(١"

It is doubtless that the brothers of Joseph were not ignorant of their deeds and actions. They knew who Joseph was and they were aware that their deeds were not

good but still behaved in a senseless manner and their deeds were foolish; that is to .say, their deeds were not consistent with sound reason and intellect

In addition, when Prophet Moses (‘a) told his people that Allah has given you orders to .slaughter a cow, they asked him if he was deriding them

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقَرَةً قَالُوا أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوًا قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

And when Moses said to his people, ‘Indeed Allah commands you to slaughter a cow,’“ they said, ‘Do you take us in derision?’ He said, ‘I seek refuge in Allah lest I should be (one of the ignorant!’”(٢

In this verse also ignorance means foolishness, not lack of knowledge. Prophet Moses (‘a) did not seek refuge in Allah from lack of knowledge but from

p: ٣٠١

.Surat Yusuf ١٢:٨٩ -١
.Surat al-Baqarah ٢:٦٧ -٢

deficiency of wisdom, imprudence, and behavior in opposition to wisdom and truth. In the book “Usul al-Kafi” one section is dedicated to ‘knowledge’ and another to ‘reason and ignorance’ and this was done because in that section ignorance is opposed to reason not knowledge, and as we have said, often ignorance is used to mean foolish .and unwise conduct and is used as the opposite of reason not knowledge

Forbearance, Befitting of the Saints [Awliya’] of Allah

In his advice the Noble Prophet (S) warns that sometimes in personal life man is confronted by unwise people whose behavior is foolish, and he recommends that the best method of interaction with those who lack manners is forbearance so that one may both derive good benefits from the society as well as free himself from becoming entangled in quarrels and adopt a sound path despite enmity and thus become :beloved by Allah

(Allah loves a person who is forbearing, modest, chaste and high-minded."(١)"

:The Gracious Qur'an explains the way of fighting a foolish enemy in the following way

وَلاَ تَسْتَوِی الْحَسَنَهُ وَلاَ السَّیِّئَهُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِی هِیَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِی بَیْنَکَ وَبَیْنَهُ عَدَاوَهٌ کَأَنَّهُ وَلِیٌّ حَمِیمٌ * وَمَا یلَقَّاهَا إِلاَّ الَّذِینَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا یلَقَّاهَا إِلاَّ ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِیمٍ * وَإِمَّا یَنْزَغَنَّکَ مِن الشَّیطَانِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِیعُ الْعَلِیمُ

And not alike are good and evil. Repel [evil] with what is best. [If you do so,] behold, he" between whom and you was enmity, will be as though he were a sympathetic friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient, and

p: ٣٠٢

.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ٣, p. ١٧۴ -١

none is granted it except the greatly endowed. Should a temptation from Satan disturb you, seek the protection of Allah. Indeed He is the All-hearing, the All-(knowing."(١)

This is the method which the Qur'an introduces in regard to encountering stubborn and foolish people and is one of finest and best ways of instruction for the reason that every person who behaves badly expects the injured person to retaliate, but when he sees the offended person encounters him in a good and constructive manner which is contrary to his expectations, he becomes transformed and as a result of the pressure of his conscience feels inferior and consequently changes his unacceptable ways of .conduct

It is for this reason that we see that a great deal of people used to surround the Noble Prophet (S) seeking to be in his presence. On the basis of the words of Allah, the reason for this was the attributes of mercy and forbearance which the Noble Prophet :(S) possessed

فَبِمَا رَحْمَهٍ مِن اللّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ کُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِیظَ الْقَلْبِ لاَنفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِکَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِی الأَمْرِ...

It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and"

hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them and plead for forgiveness from them, and consult them in their affairs…”(۲)

And also in regard to the logic of the conduct of the righteous servants of Allah, the Qur’an states:

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ

p: ۳۰۳

۱- ۳۶-۳۴:۴۱ Surat Fussilat.

۲- ۳:۱۵۹ Surat Al ‘Imran.

الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا

“The servants of the All-Beneficent are those who walk humbly on the earth, and when the ignorant address them, say ‘Peace.”(۱)

A story has been narrated that there once lived a wise man who invited his friend to his house. The wise man brought some food for his friend, but the badly behaved wife of the wise man came forward and took the food from the wise man’s visitor, insulting the wise man. The visitor got very angry and left the wise man’s house in protest.

The wise man followed his friend and when he got close to him, said, “Do you remember one day when we were busy eating some food and a chicken came forward and spoilt the whole food and neither of us became angry? Imagine that this badly behaved wife of mine is like a chicken!” After hearing this, that man swallowed his anger and said, “The wise man is right. Patience and forbearance are a cure for every pain.”

They have also narrated that one day Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (‘a) was confronted in an alley in Medina by a man from Syria who was heavily under the influence of the inimical propaganda of Bani Umayyah and began insulting Imam al-Hasan (‘a). After patiently and quietly bearing his words Imam al-Hasan (‘a) said, “I think you are a stranger in this town and you are under the wrong impression. If you have nowhere

,to sleep, you are welcome in my house. If you are indebted

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.Surat al-Furqan ۲۵:۶۳ -۱

".I will repay your debts. If you are hungry, I will give you food to satiate you

The conduct of Imam al-Hasan ('a) was very surprising to that man and a dramatic change overtook his heart. He was so impressed by Imam al-Hasan ('a) that he said, "O son of the Prophet! If before this meeting they had asked me who the worst men under the sky were, I would have answered that you and your father are the worst people on earth, but now I believe that you and your father are the best people on ".earth

A perfect man who has attained the loftiest levels of spiritual service and devotion to Allah is not expected to behave otherwise and if they did not handle ignorant and foolish people with patience and forbearance, they would not have been fit to be the .representatives of Allah on earth

It has been narrated in regard to Khwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi that a man brought a letter to him in which he was insulted by the enemy. In that letter, Khwajah had been ."called "Dog son of Dog

In response to such insults, Khwajah kindly and wisely said, "It is not true that I am a dog, because a dog has four legs, fur and it barks while I neither have four legs nor have I fur nor do I bark. A dog has long nails and I have short nails, a dog is short and bent while I am tall and straight. I laugh

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but a dog does not. I think but a dog does not. In short, none of the characteristics of ".the dog are found in me. So, none of the claims of the writer of this letter are true

:Explaining the social benefits of patience and forbearance, Imam 'Ali ('a) states

The first reward the exerciser of forbearance acquires is that others become his" helpers against the ignorant."(1)

Moderateness and the Difference between It and Lenience and Compromise

The third quality which, if attained, protects man from loss and failure on the Day of Resurrection is moderateness in his dealings with others. Moderateness [mudara] includes soft-heartedness, gentle behavior, sociability, friendliness and tolerance of the bothersome behavior of others. There are a lot of hadiths praising moderateness and its benefits in the hereafter. One of those hadiths is the Noble Prophet's (S) saying:

"Moderateness with the people is half of faith."

He also stated:

"There are three things which if they are lacking in man, his deeds do not become complete: self-restraint [wara'] which discourages one from sin, good ethics with which one coexists with others in moderation, and forbearance [hilm] which repels the unwise and foolish."(2)

Elsewhere, he considers tolerance to be on par with discharging obligatory and incumbent duties:

"We the prophets have been charged to practice moderateness with the people in the same way that we have been charged to perform obligatory duties."(3)

Man is always confronted by individuals who for various personal motives behave improperly. Sometimes, jealousy or other unbecoming traits impel one to behave in such a manner that he hurts other human beings. What is

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۱- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۱۷۹, wisdom [hikmat] ۱۹۷, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

۲- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۱۷۹.

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۵, p. ۵۳ -۳

under discussion is how must one behave and when confronted by such people? If a person retaliates and conducts himself in a tit for tat manner when faced with the .unwise and foolish, he usually complicates the situation

In such circumstances, he should abstain from retaliation and adopt moderateness. He has to try to overlook the inappropriate behavior of the antagonists and practice tolerance and not react very fast. In some instances, a person has to turn a blind eye to the unsuitable behavior of other people and not confront them with enmity despite their malice. In addition to that, one may have to help them and be at their service. If during his life a person is such that he is moderate and patient with malicious .antagonists, he can reap very desirable results and succeed in life

However, if he desires to retaliate for every hostile act perpetrated against him or for every one of his rights that is abused, he will be wasting his energies and time in addition to torturing his own heart and losing his own peace of mind. In addition to all this, he would only be increasing enmity and grudges. For this reason, the best way to deal with inimical human beings is to be moderate because moderation when dealing with other people is the way of the intelligent and wise as well as being a key to .righteousness and salvation

Be moderate with others because that is the key to righteousness and it is the“

(method of the wise.”(۱

What is worth discussing is that sometimes moderateness is mistakenly interpreted to mean lenience and compromise. Compromise is making concessions with those who have deviated and with the opponents of the truth and denotes that a person is negligent when propagating the truths of the religion of Allah or not protesting when :he witnesses deviations. In this regard, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states

By my life there will be no regard for anyone or slackening from me in fighting“

against one who opposes right or gropes in misguidance…”(2)

Elsewhere, while complaining about those of weak determination of his time who refrained from the truth and chose the way of compromise and ease, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states:

“Know that—may Allah have mercy upon you—you are living at a time when those who speak about truth are few, when tongues are loath to utter the truth and those who stick to the right are considered lowly. The people of this time are engaged in disobedience. Their youths are wicked, their old men are sinful, their learned men are hypocrites and their speakers are sycophants. Their young people do not respect their elders and their rich men do not support the destitute…”(3)

As we can observe Imam ‘Ali (‘a) has reproached compromise, weakness and sycophancy with the people who oppose the truth and he perceives flattery as a mean and reproachable quality and a cause of social corruption and collapse of the pillars of honor and glory.

In the society, there are calm and imperturbable people

1- Ghurar al-Hikam, p. ۴۷۹, trans, Muhammad ‘Ali Ansari.
2- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۸۷, sermon [khutbah] ۲۴, trans. Fayd al-Islam.
3- Ibid., p. ۷۲۹, sermon [khutbah] ۲۲۴, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

who do not show any reaction to the events taking place around them and they pay no attention to the problems of others and the problems of religion and society.

This insensitive group of people has a lazy, weak and indulgent spirit and they desire to be in a place where they can recline and remain apathetic enjoying ease and joy. If sometimes war arises and they are called upon to go to the battle front, they pull themselves aside and take flight to secure places.

Naturally, this group has justifications for their deeds because no one is prepared to

admit that he is a bad person that does bad deeds; on the contrary, they even devise apparently good excuses for their actions. Usually, their justification is that they have to be moderate with the enemy and should not to be strict because harsh reactions .are fruitless

Sometimes, they refer to hadiths which assert that the cause of prosperity is moderateness with other people. If this way of thinking were allowed to spread in the society, fighting would never take place, no movement would occur and the way of jihad would be closed. As has been explained, this kind of negligence seeks to justify lenience and compromise and is created by self-indulgent people who seek to shirk social responsibility and avoid war and fighting under the auspices of religious law. This is an extremely undesirable pretext which brings about unfortunate results and .the Glorious Qur'an explicitly reproaches it

The Prophet's (S) Lack of Lenience in Regard to the Polytheists

In the early days

of Islam, time and again the polytheists used to ask the Noble Prophet (S) to show leniency in regard to his religion so that they too could be flexible in their conduct. In reality, they wanted the Noble Prophet (S) to make concessions so that they might obtain privileges from him and the result would be the Noble Prophet (S) coming to terms and acceding to their demands. They wanted him, just like worldly leaders, to relinquish firmness in accomplishing his goals and to show compromise and pliability :with his enemies. In regard to their demands, Allah states

فَلَا تُطِعِ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ * وَدُّوا لَوْ تُدْهِنُ فَيُدْهِنُونَ

So do not yield to the rejecters, who are eager that you should be pliant, so that they" (too) may be pliant."(1)

Definitely moderateness and tractability vis-à-vis the enemy and making concessions in regard to enforcing the laws of Allah, propagating divine values and waging war

against corruption is not desirable. This is in fact compromise with the enemy, and it is for this reason that Allah strongly prohibits this action and asks the Noble Prophet (S) to strictly enforce His laws on this matter:

وَأَن احْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلاَ تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَاحْذَرْهُمْ أَنْ يفْتِنُوكَ عَنْ بَعْضِ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّمَا يرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يصِيبَهُمْ بِبَعْضِ ذُنُوبِهِمْ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِن النَّاسِ لَفَاسِقُونَ

"Judge between them by what Allah has sent down, and do not follow their low desires. Beware of them lest they should beguile you from part of what Allah

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۱- ۶۸:۸-۹ Surat al-Qalam.

has sent down to you. But if they turn their backs [on you], then know that Allah desires to punish them for some of their sins, and indeed many of the people are transgressors."(۱)

Every kind of compromise and pliability is not to be considered to be moderateness. Moderateness is applicable to circumstances where rational and correct goals are conceived as well as achieved in the sense that man patiently bears some of the problems which some people cause for him in order to attain higher aims, not that man should not react to every person and every kind of behavior out of nonchalance and compromise with the enemies in the name of tolerance.

We must differentiate between moderateness and compromise and understand that, with regard to Islamic goals and religious issues, overlooking transgressions, make concessions, or display flexibility with regard to theoretical and practical principles is quite unacceptable. When divine duty is incumbent upon man, he must discharge it with utmost firmness, be resolute and unwavering in executing it and refrain from every kind of negligence and carelessness.

It is not advisable for man to always show compromise and make concessions with every person and be pliable in enforcing divine goals. A person has to resist, stand

firm on his feet and fight to the last breath to carry out divine duties and not show any lenience. When we listen to the whispers of the propaganda machine of the enemy, .we hear them calling us fundamentalists

Of course, their aim in

.Surat al-Ma'idah ۵:۴۹ -۱

using this term is to weaken our nation and present our people as having a harsh and merciless character, but when we pay attention to this label we see that it is a very .proper and dignified name and we should warmly welcome it

Indeed, we are fundamentalists—we always protect our fundamentals, we believe that we must not give up our fundamental ideals and aims, and we must not bargain them for anything. Yes, sometimes it is necessary to make temporary and tactical compromises and yield in regard to issues that are not fateful and ideal, but we must .never make concessions in regard to fundamental ideals and goals

During the difficult days in Mecca when the Noble Prophet (S) was under intense pressure from the Quraysh and he and his followers were being tortured and persecuted by the polytheists to the extent that serious limitations were placed in the way of Islamic propagation and fulfillment of the role of the prophetic mission, every once in a while one of the Prophet's followers was slaughtered for the sake of love for the Divine as well as due to their goals and ideals and naturally in this turmoil the greatest need of the oppressed and tortured Muslims was liberation from these persecutions and winning the support of people who would harm them against the .Quraysh and hence prepare the means of their redemption

Historians have said that during that sensitive time the people of Ta'if proposed to help as well as support

the Noble Prophet (S) and stand by the Muslims in wars and conflicts together with protecting the Muslims with their money and lives on the condition that they would not be obliged to perform the daily prayers because they did not perceive it befitting of their status to prostrate on the ground and place their foreheads on clay; in fact, their culture did not allow them to do this.

This proposal was offered to the Noble Prophet (S) at a time when he was in the worst of hardships and difficulties in addition to being under constant pressure of the enemies who had surrounded him on every side. Had the Noble Prophet (S) been like other social leaders, he might have accepted these proposals, taken advantage of the situation, entered into an agreement and derived benefit from his allies while waiting for a suitable moment to gradually make these people acquainted with prayer and other acts of worship and servitude while teaching them cultural activities. Some interpreters of the Qur'an say that the following verse was revealed in this regard:

وَلَوْلاَ أَنْ ثَبَّتْنَاکَ لَقَدْ كِدْتَ تَرْكَنُ إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْئًا قَلِيلاً

"And had it not been that We had established you, you would certainly have been near to incline to them a little."(1)

Allah warns the Muslims against being inclined to the polytheists and making concessions in regard to religion. All the programs, wars and struggles were in the cause of religion and for the sake of making people worship Allah and have connection with

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۱- Surat al-Isra' ۱۷:۷۴.

Him; therefore, how can one make concessions or bargain with them before they become Muslims and worshipers of Allah? The Noble Prophet (S) thus responded to the proposals of the people of Ta'if:

"There is no benefit in a religion devoid of genuflection and prostration."(1)

They would have loved to see the Noble Prophet (S) compromise with them and give up his ideals in order to win their support and assistance, but never would Allah grant such permission nor the Noble Prophet (S) engage in such bargaining, so he told them that he would not compromise for a religion that is devoid of prostration and he did not need their support. He explained that his religion was dependent on prayer and connection with Allah and the original aim of religion and the prophetic mission was .establishing the sovereignty of Allah and divine worship

The necessity of guarding the fundamentals and basic ideals in all situations has been proven, including such cases as leadership and the management of society. The leader has to be firm in the cause of protecting fundamentals and basic ideals and never compromise. However, he can compromise and make concessions in subsidiary .matters if he deems it expedient to protect the fundamentals

Therefore, social leaders must sometimes show firmness and decisiveness and at other times flexibility and forgiveness. Again, that which must be persistently and firmly safeguarded are the religious fundamentals and the high divine ideals. These cannot be overlooked nor compromised at whatever cost, but in subordinate issues it

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٢١, p. ١٥٣ -١

is possible for man to make concessions and bargains and for a leader to overlook .certain things on the basis of expediency

The preceding explanation has been to emphasize caution in not mistaking moderateness for compromise and to distinguish the limits of the two. Of course, it is very difficult to discern the bounds between acceptable moderation and reproachable .compromise

A person has to be very careful to be able to detect in what circumstances to use moderateness and when not to be moderate as well as discern when overlooking something is tantamount to compromise. One of the ways to distinguish compromise

from moderateness is to observe whether overlooking or turning a blind eye to something will result in trampling the basic and important religious issues underfoot .or not

If it tramples fundamental religious ideals underfoot, then one ought to know that he is engaging in reproachable compromise. However, when one puts his own personal interests aside and sacrifices in order to acquire greater goals, he has interacted with moderateness with his adversary. Of course, one must be aware that there are .dubious and complicated instances which call for much accuracy

O Abu Dharr! If you desire to be the strongest of men, completely trust in Allah. If you" want to be the most esteemed of men, have piety and if you want to be the wealthiest of men, have more certainty in that which is with Allah than that which is in your ".hands

In this section of the hadith once again

discussion about piety has arisen and as can be observed, there is no definite relationship between this subject and the previous discussions, although other issues which are in conformity with piety have been mentioned. In the above quotation the Noble Prophet (S) reminds us about three points. The first point is that if you want to have strength and find the capacity to better attain your goals and aims and not experience weakness and easy defeat in pursuing your objectives, you must have complete trust in Allah. The second point is that if you want to be beloved and :honorable, you must have piety. Allah, the Exalted, states

... إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ...

(Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious among you..."(١)..."

The third point is that if you want to be free from want, you must have more confidence in that which is in the hands of Allah than that which is in your hands. Every person derives benefit from the graces of Allah to some extent and has some kind of

capital at his disposal. Sometimes, he has enough money and wealth which make him free from need of other people and he does not have turn to anyone in order to earn money. Or, he has enough food and bread and hence he does not need to borrow .food from other human beings. This in itself is freedom from want

However, we should realize to what extent we can put faith

.Surat al-Hujurat ۴۹:۱۳ -۱

in our wealth. Money is likely to be lost or stolen by a thief just as any other blessing is likely to disappear such that man finds no chance to continue to derive benefit from it. It is possible that a person finds he cannot continue to have access to his wealth and use it when he needs it, but that which is in the hands of Allah can never be lost at all .and there is nothing beyond His reach in the universe

Therefore, with regard to the all-encompassing nature of Allah and His power and to the fact that His ownership of all things and existents and whatever He wills is never breached, even if something were on the planet of Mars and Allah wills that it should .reach a person, it will not violate His command

If we attain such awareness that the whole of existence and inner as well as outward powers are under the control of Allah, truly believe that there is nothing outside His authority, and know that His ownership and encompassment is over all things, our belief in Allah will increase and we will have more confidence in that which is in His hands than that which is in our hands. It is natural that a person who has faith in the power of Allah will be the richest man because Divine will is never breached and there .is nothing outside His power

The Station of Trust in Allah

As has been observed, the Noble Prophet (S) regards trust in Allah

tawakkul] as the essence of power and strength. Taking into consideration the] importance of trust in Allah and its significant role in life especially at times of difficulty as well as wrong interpretations which occur in regard to it, it is necessary to have a .short discussion about this topic

Tawakkul is derived from the word "wikalah" and in the culture of Islam, it means that man ought to take Allah as his sure support and entrust all his affairs to Him. It has been related that the Noble Prophet (S) asked the Archangel Gabriel about the :purport of reliance on Allah. In response, the Archangel Gabriel said

Trust in Allah means that creations do not cause harm or benefit to man nor do they" grant anything to him nor do they prevent him from anything. Also, trust in Allah is losing hope in created things. When a servant attains such knowledge, he does not do anything for other than Allah, does not put his trust in other than Allah, does not fear other than Him, and does not covet other than Him. This is the meaning of trust in (Allah."(١

In the Gracious Qur'an, there are many verses with regard to trust in Allah, amongst :which is this verse

... وَعَلَى اللّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

(And in Allah let all the faithful put their trust."(٢"

In this verse Allah, the Exalted, introduces total trust in Him as essentially inseparable) (.from faith

In the same way that man usually chooses a lawyer for his worldly affairs and

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧١, p. ١٣٨ -١

.Surat Al 'Imran ٣:١٢٢ -٢

entrusts many of his activities to him in order to reap beneficial results, it is befitting

for Allah's servants to rely on Him alone in all worldly affairs and consider Him as their lawyer in order to secure their needs without stress and anxiety. In other words, a person who intends to solve his problems has three ways at his disposal: to rely on his own power, to trust in other people to help him, or to put his hopes in Allah and turn a blind eye to all other than Him.

Meanwhile, total trust and complete reliance on Allah derives from man's knowledge about the Lordship of Allah because if man conceives Allah as the Owner and Possessor of jurisdiction as well as the One in whose hands all existence lies, he no longer sees any need to beg from anyone. In one of his supplications, Imam 'Ali ('a) says:

"O my Allah! Thou art the most attached to Thy lovers and the most ready to assist those who trust in Thee. You know their hidden secrets, are aware of whatever is in their consciences and know the extent of their intelligence. Consequently, their secrets are open to Thee and their hearts are eager to see Thee. If loneliness bores them, Thy remembrance gives them solace. If distresses befall them, they beseech Thy protection, because they know that the reigns of affairs are in Thy hands, and that their movements depend on Thy commands."(١)

In regard to the benefits of complete reliance

١- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ٧١٩, sermon [khutbah] ٢١٨, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

on Allah, Imam al-Baqir ('a) states:

"A person who trusts in Allah will not be dominated and whoever seeks refuge in Allah will not be defeated."(١)

At the opening of the tablets of many prophets was engraved the message to believe in Allah and completely rely on Him because one of the signs of belief in Allah is total trust in Him. If man has faith in the Lordship of Allah and believes that the whole of the

existing world is under His domination and lordship, and the only worthwhile object of worship is Allah, he will never permit himself to go after any other and seek their help; on the contrary, he will always put his hope in the Divine Essence of Allah and only ask .for help from Him

Trust in Allah and Making Use of Material and Spiritual Means

Trust in Allah is a matter of the heart and not an outward mode of conduct; for this reason, complete reliance does not mean that man has to seclude himself from the people or live as a recluse in the mosque and only busy himself with worship and invocation of Allah or quit work thinking he can earn a living with the hope that Allah will grant sustenance. Without the least doubt, this interpretation is wrong and a person who takes this approach has detoured and not attained the real meaning and :purport of trust in Allah. It has been narrated in a hadith

The Noble Prophet (S) saw people who never engaged in farming and cultivation. He“ ’.asked them, ‘Who are you

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۱, p. ۱۵۱ -۱

They replied, ‘We are those who rely on Allah.’ The Noble Prophet responded, ‘No, [you are not those people put their trust in Allah] but burdens [and parasites] on other (human beings’.”(۱

People who do not have the right conception of divine knowledge vainly imagine that trust in Allah means that a person should not derive benefit from material means and facilities and that one who makes use of material conveniences and facilities does not have complete reliance on Allah. Not every person who derives benefit from material means is devoid of reliance and not every human being who does not make use of material conveniences has trust in Allah. There are lazy and indolent people who wait for bread to be provided to them and they are pleased with just that and they do not have the vigor to work. When it is asked of them why they do not work, they say that

they rely on Allah, sustenance is in His hands and only He can provide it! In reality, this so-called justification is an excuse and a cover for laziness and they do not really have reliance on Allah. Of course, some of these people truly have reliance but, in any case, .this interpretation of not deriving benefit on the pretext of trust is incorrect

As we have already said, reliance is a matter of the heart and it denotes dependence on Allah in such a way that man has to derive support from Allah. For this reason, it

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.Mustadrik al-Wasa'il, vol. ۱۱, p. ۲۱۷ -۱

is possible for man to attain the highest levels of reliance on Allah and at the same time derive benefit from material means and conveniences in order to fulfill divine duties and responsibilities. It is possible for man to make more effort than other people and be more earnest at work and still rely only on Allah for Allah is disgusted with lazy and indolent people and he has enjoined work on man because divine .wisdom necessitates that the affairs of this world have to traverse a natural course

A person that has knowledge of Allah fundamentally knows that divine wisdom necessitates that affairs ought to take place by means of material mediums. Divine wisdom also necessitates that every phenomenon reaches fulfillment through its own mechanism. Therefore, because we know Allah has perfect wisdom, we can understand that which His wisdom necessitates, which is establishment of the system of causality. In the end, human perfection depends on this very system by means of which human beings are placed in the crucible of tests and trials without which .humanity would not move towards perfection

Man's perfection is dependent upon performance of duties of servitude towards Allah which is in turn dependent upon the system of human relations which is governed by the system of causality. Therefore, if man seeks the path of ease and secludes himself from other human beings in order to preoccupy himself with worship and he ,fails to work and make effort, and acts in opposition to divine wisdom

p: ٣٢٢

.reliance on Allah will not make sense

On this basis, divine wisdom necessitates that man must make use of means to attain his needs and desires. If it were such that only requesting sustenance from Allah were enough for bread to fall from heaven, then no one would ever work for a living and .people would never be tried

However, when it is said that we ought to derive benefit from means in order to attain our needs, it does not signify that our providers of sustenance are the earth and our work. These are from Allah and their management are in His hands, and therefore subsistence too is in His hands. Man has the duty to go after the means in order for divine goals to reach fulfillment in the universe and those goals are for the purpose of .man's perfection

Therefore, the one who relies on Allah has to work and not be negligent like those who do not trust in Allah; of course, the difference between these two lies in their inner states and the conditions of their hearts. The one who relies on Allah is motivated by obedience to the will of Allah and he makes effort while depending on .Allah

However, a person that is not monotheistic and does not rely on Allah seeks his sustenance in his work and efforts and/or from other people. A believer is a person who puts his hope in none other than Allah and perceives all facilities as coming from Him

p: ٣٢٣

and if even he were deprived of all his material things, he does not lose even the slightest hope in his Lord because he knows that whatever Allah does for his servant is out of wisdom, for the good of His servant and He never deprives his slave of that .which is beneficial and good for him

On the one hand, the cosmic order has been formed on the basis of causality and man

has to attain his needs by making effort within that system; on the other hand, work, seeking a livelihood and interaction with others are for the sake of preparing the ground for tests and trials because if man is not tried, he cannot move towards perfection. There has to be employment, the relationship between worker and employer and observance of their mutual rights in order for the ground for man's perfection to be prepared under the auspices of work, effort and respect of mutual .rights

For this reason, man has the duty to work but at the same time he has to believe that his sustenance is provided by Allah and he has to rely on Him. True trust in Allah does not mean that one ought not to work but that his heart has to be with Allah. He has to believe that his sustenance is provided ultimately by Allah not by his work. It is in this case that he becomes successful and overcomes the problems and hardships of life because he has put his

p: ۳۲۴

.hope in the Eternal Divine Essence

It has been narrated that on an occasion when Prophet Moses ('a) became ill, the children of Israel came to visit him and told him that if he were to take a particular herbal medicine, he would feel better. Prophet Moses ('a) responded, "I will not take any medicine until Allah cures me." Some period elapsed and Prophet Moses ('a) did .not get well

Then, inspiration was revealed to him, "I swear upon My honor and glory that I will not cure you unless you take that herbal medicine which the Children of Israel said would cure you." After that Moses used that medicine and became well, but he was worried about what he had told the Children of Israel. Inspiration was once again sent to him, "O Moses! Did you want to invalidate My wisdom with your reliance on Me? Who "?besides Me placed that medicinal benefit and effect in the roots of the herbs

In addition, it has been narrated that an ascetics left the city to live in the mountains. He decided not to ask for anything from anyone until Allah directly provided

sustenance for him. Seven days and nights elapsed and no food came for him. The ascetic was about to die when he supplicated to Allah, "O my Lord! I will die if you do not provide my sustenance!" Allah responded, "I swear upon My honor and glory! I will not grant you livelihood until you return to the people and

p: ٣٢٥

live in society." The ascetic left the hill and went into the city. When he arrived in the city, some people brought him water while others brought him food and bread. At that moment, Allah said to him, "O ascetic! Did you want to invalidate my wisdom with your asceticism? Do you not know that it is more beloved to me to provide livelihood to my servants by means of other servants than to provide it directly without any intermediaries?"

Sustenance does not only comprise food, but also includes spiritual and material benefits such as knowledge. Therefore, one should not be lazy about acquisition of knowledge and fail to attend classes on the pretext that he relies on Allah to provide him with knowledge. According to a hadith:

"Knowledge is not attained by studying; knowledge is a light which Allah places in the heart of whomever He wishes."(١)

True, knowledge is provided by Allah and He grants it to whomever He wishes, but we are duty-bound to learn and be earnest in acquiring knowledge and make use of every opportunity in its attainment. It is not true that a person can become a scholar without hard work in the same way that a person cannot earn worldly wealth without making effort and undergoing hardships.

All the blessings which man desires to attain are at the disposal of Allah and the means are not the original determiners but are tools which Allah has assigned for acquiring blessings and, because Allah wants to grant His sustenance

p: ٣٢٦

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ١, p. ٢٢٥ -١

by these very means and facilities, we are duty-bound to derive benefit from them even though it is possible for Allah to grant us unimaginable blessings and favors without our having to make any effort and also when we lack necessary means and .facilities

In contrast, it is also possible for us to fail to attain our desired goals even after much effort and access to all the necessary means and this is indicative of the fact that we ought not to put our hopes in worldly agencies. In essence, people must rely only on .Allah while making use of material facilities and conveniences

As the Noble Prophet (S) states, if one wants to be the strongest person, he must put his hope in Allah. He must make his inner relationship with Him strong so that he may attain inner peace and under the auspices this relationship rely on His eternal power .because He is able to do all things and is the best helper in hardships and problems

Indeed, it is with regard to this trust and firm relationship with Allah that the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali ('a)—that perfect man who used to tremble when praying and supplicating Allah, faint and fall on the ground as a result of fear of Allah—would never bend to the enemy nor fear and the enemies used to flee from him like ants and locusts and they could not stand face to face with him because he ,had the help of Allah

the Exalted, and His eternal power and he had the Supporter who is never weak and powerless and everything is managed by His will. During the war of Jamal, he gave :the standard to his son Muhammad Hanafiyyah and ordered him

Mountains may move from their position but you should not move from yours. Grit" your teeth. Lend to Allah your head (in fighting for Allah, give yourself completely to Allah). Plant your feet firmly on the ground; have your eye on the remotest foe and close your eyes (to their numerical majority). And keep sure that succor is but from

(Allah, the Glorified."(1)

If man does not have trust in Allah, his conscience is always anxious that his life will be filled with distress and agitation because he believes he will not derive benefit. He is heedless of the genuine and sure support and he relies on false and shaky supports. .Therefore, in order to have power, we have to have total trust and reliance on Allah

The Relationship between Piety and Trust in Allah

:In continuation, the Holy Prophet states

O Abu Dharr! If all people observe this verse it would suffice them: 'And whoever" practices piety, He shall make a way out for him from whence he shall not reckon. And whosoever puts his trust in Allah, He shall suffice him. Allah attains His purpose. Allah ".'has set a measure for all things

In this holy verse both piety [taqwa] and trust [tawakkul] in Allah have been) mentioned. This shows that there is a profound relationship between them and they

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۶۲, sermon [khutbah] ۱۱, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

cannot be separated. Maybe the reason piety was mentioned first is that attaining piety is the prelude to realization of trust in Allah. Thus, a person cannot reach the (.truth of trust in Allah without first being pious

There is no doubt that all heavenly and earthly affairs lie in the hands of Allah and there is no other power vis-à-vis the power of Allah and it is He who manages the created world with His will and everything happens according to His desire and resolution. For this reason, we must only put our hope in Him and ask only from Him .and feel free from want from all others

Because Allah has given us orders to respect other human beings and be thankful for their good deeds to us, we have to show due regard to others on the basis of divine

duty, but we must refrain from flattery and improper tribute in the vain imagination that a thing will be provided to us by another human being. A person who trusts and believes in Allah conceives sustenance as coming from Allah; for this reason, he does not see the need to compliment other people and bow down to them in the hope that they will help him. Flattery and bowing down are not compatible with man's self-esteem.

Allah, the Exalted, and the divine awliya' of religion ('a) have ordered us to be humble to some people such us our parents and mentors who have great rights upon us and likewise they

have advised us to be modest and polite to the progeny and descendants of the Noble Prophet (S) because of their closeness to the Noble Prophet (S) and due to our desire to obey Allah and show respect to the Prophet of Allah, not on account of coveting the world or for material rewards.

Allah, the Exalted, mentions humility and respect towards parents after mentioning worship and servitude to Him:

وَقَضَى رَبُّکَ أَلاَّ تَعْبُدُوا إِلاَّ إِیَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَیْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا یَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَکَ الْکِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ کِلاَهُمَا فَلاَ تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلاَ تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلاً کَرِیمًا * وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَهِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا کَمَا رَبَّیَانِی صَغِیرًا

"Your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship anyone except Him, and [He has enjoined] kindness to parents, should they reach old age at your side—one of them or both of them—do not say to them, 'Fie!' And do not chide them, but speak to them noble words. Lower the wing of humility to them out of mercy, and say, 'My Lord! Have mercy on them, just as they reared me when I was [a] small [child]'."(١)

In regard to the rights of teachers and mentors, Imam al-Sajjad ('a) states:

"The right of the one who educates you and nourishes your soul is that you must respect him, venerate his gatherings, listen to his words with honor, look at him and never speak loudly in his presence. If someone asks him a question, never respond to

that question before he himself answers it nor talk

.Surat al-Isra' ۱۷:۲۳-۲۴ -۱

)in his class and never gossip about anyone in his presence."(۱)

If a person humbles himself before someone and compliments another human being on account of coveting worldly and material benefit, the reality of his deeds is polytheism and the truth is that he conceives Allah, the Exalted, as incapable and so .covets what other people have

A person that knows Allah, whose awareness of Him is perfect and pays heed to His word: "Does not Allah suffice His servant?"(۲) does not hope in any other save Him to solve his problems. He only trusts Allah, the Exalted, and at the same time discharges his duties. If his duty is to work, he works and if his duty is to study, he studies and if .his duty is to fight in the way of Allah, he fights and puts the rest in Allah's hands

Imam Khomeini, may Allah be pleased with him, used to repeatedly say, "We are duty-bound to fight; however, with regard to whether we will win or not, that is up to ".Him. Whatever He desires and deems expedient will come to pass

Lesson ۳۷: Divine Providence and Divine Decree and the Role of True Faith

point

In the previous lessons, the focus of discussion was piety and it was explained that when a person is pious, he should not be worried about his sustenance for the reason that Allah, the Exalted, grants him ways of solving his problems and when he finds himself in difficulties and in a dead end situation, Allah shows him the way of deliverance and grants

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲, p. ۴۲ -۱

.Surat al-Zumar ۳۹:۳۶ -۲

.him livelihood from ways he cannot even imagine

In reality, in the previous sections the Noble Prophet's (S) recommendations to Abu Dharr in regard to the connection between piety and sustenance have been discussed because man desires legitimate, pure and ample subsistence. If he conceives that piety results in the expansion and increase of his livelihood, his motivation to attain .piety increases

Submission to Truth, the Means of Averting Worries

So, to what extent should a believer be worried about his sustenance? To what extent should he think about improving his life and in what ways? In what way should he earn his sustenance? There is no doubt that man has needs which, if not provided, would bring his life to a halt. Sustenance is one of the things upon which the continuation of life depends, so naturally a person who loves life is also worried about .sustenance

As we have previously said, sustenance is not confined to food. The material and spiritual blessings that Allah grants to mankind are all subsistence including but not .limited to a person's clothing, home, spouse, teachers and knowledge

With this broad point of view that subsistence consists of all material and spiritual graces and also the certainty that every person has no option but to acquire .subsistence, it is natural that every person is worried about their livelihood

However, the degree of a person's apprehension is dependent on their various levels of knowledge and certainty; that is to say, in the same way that people's faith and knowledge are not the same, their levels

of apprehension too are not the same and their worry decreases to the same extent that their knowledge increases so much so that some of the saints [awliya'] of Allah

reach a level of knowledge where they do not even think about themselves. The station of submission which has been mentioned in the verses of the Qur'an denotes :this station. Allah, the Exalted, states

فَلاَ وَرَبِّکَ لاَ یُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّیَ یُحَکِّمُوکَ فِیمَا شَجَرَ بَیْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لاَ یَجِدُوا فِی أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِمَّا قَضَیْتَ وَیُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِیمًا

But no, by Lord! They will not believe until they make you a judge in their disputes,“ then do not find within their hearts any dissent to your verdict and submit in full (submission.”(۱

In the station of submission man reaches a stage where he completely yields to Allah, does not want anything for himself, forgets his desires and only pays attention to what Allah wants. If a person attains this stage, he becomes liberated from anxieties :and everything becomes easy for him

Allah, the Exalted, sent down inspiration to David, ‘O David! You desire and will“ something and I too desire and will something and that which I desire takes place. Therefore, you will attain what you desire if you submit to My will and I will cast you (into distress and frustrate your desires if you do not yield to My will’.”(۲

Some people regard the station of submission to the will of Allah as higher than the station of contentment with His will because they believe that in

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.Surat al-Nisa’ ۴:۶۵ -۱
.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۸۲, p. ۳۶ -۲

the station of contentment man consents his will to what Allah does; for this reason, he is concerned with his own desire. However, in the station of submission, one .relinquishes his desires to Allah

They also consider it to be higher than the station of trust in Allah for the reason that reliance on Allah denotes putting one’s hope in Allah in the affairs of life and choosing Allah to be one’s trustee. For this reason, in the station of trust in Allah, man is still

attached to himself but in the station of submission, he detaches himself from all affairs related to his self and surrenders everything to Allah.(1)

Inviting the believers to the station of submission, Allah, the Exalted, sates:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِى السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

“O you who have faith! Enter into submission, all together, and do not follow in Satan’s steps; he is indeed your manifest enemy.”(2)

The deceased ‘Allamah Tabataba’i, may Allah be pleased with him, interprets this verse thus: the words ‘salam’ and ‘islam’ and ‘taslim’ all denote one meaning and the word ‘kaffah’ just like the word ‘jami‘an’ is used for emphasis and because the verse addresses the believers, and they have been ordered to enter into submission, the order in this verse is addressed to the people of the society altogether as a group and as individual persons.

Therefore, submission is incumbent on every individual of the society and on the community as a whole;

1- Jami‘ al-Sa‘adat, vol. ٣, pp. ٢١١-٢١٢.
2- Surat al-Baqarah ٢:٢٠٨.

that is to say, they ought not to ask questions in regard to the [orders of the] religion of Allah and they have to submit to the commands of Allah and His Noble Prophet (S). In addition, because the verse is especially addressed to the believers, the surrender which the believers have been invited to connotes yielding to Allah and His Noble Prophet (S).

Therefore, submission means surrender to Him after believing in Him. For this reason, it is obligatory for the believers to yield to Allah and not to choose a path which has not been enjoined by Allah and the Prophet (S) because every nation that has ever been destroyed fell into ruin for forsaking the way of Allah and for following their own

(carnal desires; a path for which they had no justification from Allah.(1)

Those who have attained the station of submission do not have any personal desires and their will is the will of Allah. They do not worry about how and by what means their sustenance will be provided. They are only pre-occupied with how to be devoted to Allah in order to please Him more. This group definitely attains deliverance and prosperity as Imam al-Sadiq ('a) stated:

"A person who holds fast to the strong divine rope has attained deliverance."(2)

When it was asked of him what 'holding fast to the strong divine rope' meant, he responded:

"It means submission to the will of Allah."

There is no doubt conception of the station of submission is difficult for

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١- Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ٢, p.١٠٣, Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah Publications.

٢- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٢, p. ٢٠٤.

us. We are not able to comprehend how man can attain a level of knowledge and awareness to the extent that he forgets himself and only becomes pre-occupied with Allah, the Exalted, but we cannot deny the existence of this station and we know without the least doubt that the special servants of Allah have attained this station of submission and have handed over the management of their affairs to Allah.

A Brief Look at Predetermination and Divine Decree [Qada wa Qadar]

In addition to those who have attained the station of submission to the will of Allah, some have attained a position lower than that. Some of them are those who have attained the position of 'certain knowledge' ['ilm al-yaqin] and they know that all events of the cosmos—whether small or large—have a well-established order which have been decreed by Allah, the Exalted, and besides this decree, they have also

attained knowledge about definite predetermination. That is to say, besides decrees which are controlled by Allah and are changeable, all affairs have also reached a .stage of certain predetermination which is not subject to change

Qada' (predetermination) means prescription, certainty and decisiveness. 'Qadar'' (divine decree), on the other hand, signifies measuring an amount and determining an extent. Because the occurrence of events in the world is a result of divine knowledge and providence, they demand divine predestination and for the reason that limits and measures and circumstances of time and place have been determined, they have .been pre-ordained by divine decree

It is necessary to mention that sometimes predetermination and divine decree are

not clearly and correctly interpreted and there are certain ambiguities in regard to these two and many people imagine that divine decree and pre-ordination are tantamount to determinism and fatalism. Briefly, we have to say that the issue of determinism or fatalism is not connected to divine decree and providence and belief in divine decree and providence does not mean that man has to quit his duties and .fantasize that all things have been predetermined and that he has no duties

We believe that the principle of causality—the principle of cause and effect—governs the world and all events and phenomena. All phenomena acquire their necessity and existence as well as their form and temporal and spatial attributes and the rest of their qualities from their related causes. One of these causes or agents is the will of man himself and divine decree and providence entail fatalism or determinism only if we deny the interference of man's will in his deeds and if we believe that divine .decree and providence replace the power, potential and will of man

In reality, divine decree and providence merely mean that the world's system of cause and effect derive from the divine knowledge and will; of course, man's free will or volition is one of the causes or factors of this system. For this reason, belief in .divine decree and providence does not contradict man's responsibility

It was asked of the Noble Prophet (S) if prayers [hirz] which are used to cure illnesses can also prevent

p: ۳۳۷

:divine decree; in response, he said

“These prayers are themselves derived from divine decree.”(۱)

(That is to say, their effects in preventing illnesses are divine decree and providence).

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) was sitting in the shade of a leaning wall full of cracks that was about to fall. After some time, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) moved from beside that wall and went to sit in the shade of another wall. Some people asked him, “O the Commander of the Faithful! Are you running away from divine providence?”

:He replied

“I am taking refuge in divine decree from predetermination.”(۲)

That is to say, I am taking refuge in one kind of divine decree and predetermination from another kind of divine decree and predetermination. If I were to sit under a wall and it falls on my head, I am condemned to a kind of divine decree and predetermination for the reason that in the order of causes and factors if man were to sit under a wall and it fell on his head thus harming him, this is itself a kind of divine decree and predetermination and if he were to move away from a falling wall to save his life from danger, this is also another kind of divine decree and predetermination.

It is worthy of note that causes and factors are not confined to material and ordinary causes and, besides those that we know, there are also spiritual and paranormal causes. One of the causes that greatly affects man’s destiny in this world is supplication. In other

p: ۳۳۸

۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۵, p. ۸۷.

.Tawhid Saduq, p. ٣۶٩, Mu’assisah al-Nashr al-Islami Publications -٢

words, supplication is one of the ringlets on the chain of divine decree and providence which can be effective in causing events or preventing divine decree and pre-ordination. It is for this reason that it has been said:

"Supplication prevents divine decree even if the decree is very strong."(١)

Such hadiths take into consideration the whole system as well as the entire collection of causes and factors, both material and spiritual. They take into consideration instances where spiritual causes and factors overshadow material causes and factors. A person who only sees material and tangible causes imagines that causes and factors are confined in these very things and he does not know that it is possible for thousands of other causes and factors to be working under divine decree and predetermination and when those causes and effects come on the scene, they eclipse material causes and factors, hence making them ineffective:

وَإِذْ يُرِيكُمُوهُمْ إِذْ الْتَقَيْتُمْ فِى أَعْيُنِكُمْ قَلِيلاً وَيُقَلِّلُكُمْ فِى أَعْيُنِهِمْ لِيَقْضِىَ اللّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولاً وَإِلَى اللّهِ تُرْجَعُ الأمُورُ

"And when he showed them to you—when you met them [on the battlefield]—as few in your eyes, and He made you appear few in their eyes, in order that Allah may carry through a matter that was bound to be fulfilled, and to Allah all matters are returned."(٢)

As we have said, there are some people who have reached the stage of knowledge and certitude, and they know that the cosmos is governed by Allah on an accurate and calculated system and the occurrence

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Safinah al-Bihar, vol. ١, p. ۴۴۶, section on supplication [maddah du‘a], Dar al-Ta‘arif -١ li-Matbu‘at Publications.

.Surat al-Anfal ٨:۴۴ -٢

.and appearance of every event is on the basis of divine decree and predetermination

They know that all things, including sustenance, are ordained by Allah, that man is never deprived of whatever Allah has decreed, and that whatever has not been written and prescribed will not occur and is unattainable by man. Of course, as we have already said, belief in this accurate and wisely calculated system does not run .contrary to belief in duty

Man can believe in divine decree and predetermination and the unity of divine actions without being affected by fatalism and laziness, sitting at home saying, “Now that .”everything has been preordained by Allah, there is nothing we can do

On the contrary, based on divine knowledge, belief in divine decree and predestination and the unity of divine actions and issues of this nature are not incongruous with the need for making effort and discharging personal and social duties in material and spiritual issues. Regardless, if man attains this level of .knowledge and certitude, he will no longer have any anxieties

The Station of Certitude [Yaqin] and Its Levels

point

Now that we have discussed this station of certitude, it is necessary to briefly define :that station and its levels

Certitude [yaqin] is a stable belief conforming to reality which is indestructible and a source of tranquility for man. There is no doubt that certitude is higher than knowledge and ordinary belief and is the noblest and loftiest human virtue which very few human beings have attained and is a great asset, the attainment of which is tantamount to

p: ۳۴۰

.achieving great prosperity

A person that has reached the stage of certitude is not attentive to other than Allah, only trusts Allah and does not perceive any source of influence save Him. In reality,

certitude is attained after the stages of Islam (submission to the will of Allah), faith, :and piety. In this regard Imam al-Rida ('a) states

Faith [iman] is one level higher than submission [islam] and piety [taqwa] is one level" higher than faith and certitude [yaqin] is one level higher than piety and there is (nothing apportioned less among the servants of Allah than certitude."(۱)

:Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states

The Noble Prophet (S) performed his morning prayer with the people in the mosque." Then, his eyes fell on a youth who was dozing and dropping his head drowsily. His color was pale and his body was very thin. His eyes had sunk deep into the eye '?sockets. The Noble Prophet (S) asked him, 'O youth! How did you spend your night

The youth responded, 'O Prophet of Allah! I spent my night in certainty.' The Noble" Prophet (S) became amazed by the youth's response and said, 'There is a reality and truth for every certainty. What is the truth of your certainty?' The youth replied, 'O Prophet of Allah! The truth of my certainty has made me sorrowful, it keeps me awake (for worship) at nighttime and obliges me to fast during the day. I have become disinclined to the things of this life. It seems as though I am seeing

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۸۷ -۱

the Throne of Allah and all human beings have been raised and gathered for judgment and I too am among them. It seems as if I am seeing the dwellers of paradise enjoying the pleasures therein, entertaining one another while leaning on soft cushions. It seems as though the people of hell are being tortured therein and they are weeping and requesting help. I feel as though right now I can hear their '.frightful voices echoing in my ears

At this juncture the Noble Prophet (S) addressed his companions, 'This is a servant" who has enlightened his heart with the light of faith.' Then, he addressed that youth,

'Be firm on this state and never lose it.' Then, the youth requested him, 'O Prophet of Allah! Ask Allah to grant me martyrdom.' The Noble Prophet prayed for him and it did not take long before he participated in a war with the Noble Prophet (S) he was martyred after nine people, he being the tenth martyr."(١)

Certitude has three levels: ١) certain knowledge ['ilm al-yaqin], ٢) certain vision/eye of certitude ['ayn al-yaqin], ٣) certain truth [haqq al-yaqin]. All the three levels have been hinted at in the Qur'an:

كَلاَّ لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ * لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ * ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ

"No indeed! Were you to know with certain knowledge, you would surely see hell. Again, you will surely see it with the eye of certitude."(٢)

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِينِ

"Indeed this is certain truth."(٣)

١. Certain knowledge ['ilm al-yaqin]

It denotes steadfast belief and certitude which corresponds with

p: ٣۴٢

١- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ٣, p. ٨٩.

٢- Surat al-Takathur ١٠٢:۵-٧.

٣- Surat al-Waqi'ah ۵۶:٩۵.

reality which is attained by inferring something from its effect, like certitude about the existence of fire after seeing smoke.(١) In the Qur'an, Allah states:

سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ

"Soon we shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in their own souls until it becomes clear to them that He is the Real. Is it not enough that your Lord is witness to all things?"(٢)

.In this verse the existence of Allah has been inferred from signs in the horizons

[Certain vision ['ayn al-yaqin .۲

It consists of beliefs which are attained by seeing and witnessing which conforms to intuition and insightful perception. This seeing is stronger in clarity and brightness (than outward [physical] eyes.(۳

Referring to this level of certitude, it has been recorded in Shaykh Saduq's "Tawhid" :that

One of the scholars of the People of the Book [ahl al-kitab](۴) came to Amir al-" Mu'minin ('a)(۵) and said, 'O Amir al-Mu'minin! Have you seen your Lord at the time of worship?' Imam 'Ali ('a) responded, 'Woe unto you! I do not worship a Lord whom I have not seen.' The questioner said, 'How have you seen your Lord?' Imam 'Ali ('a) responded, 'Woe unto you! Physical eyes do not see Him, but the intuitive and (insightful eyes as well as hearts possessing real and steadfast faith'."(۶

[Certain truth [haqq al-yaqin .۳

It denotes decisive belief which is attained by way of obtaining the thing itself and accomplishing real connection with it in such a way that the

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.Jami' al-Sa'adat, vol. ۱, p. ۱۲۳ -۱
.Surat Fussilat ۴۱:۵۳ -۲
.Jami' al-Sa'adat, vol. ۱, p. ۱۲۴ -۳
.Either a Christian or a Jew -۴
.(Imam 'Ali ('a -۵
.Tawhid Saduq, p. ۱۰۹, Mu'assisah al-Nashr al-Islami Publications -۶

possessor of certitude witnesses by means of his intuitive and inner eyes the bounties of light from Him. The result of this level of certainty is annihilation in Allah [fana' fi Allah] and ecstatic absorption in love and affection for Him, so much so that he does

not see any independence for himself—it is like getting into fire and burning within it.(1)

It has been related in a hadith qudsi(2):

"I Man does not get near to Me by means of that which is more beloved than what I have made incumbent upon Him and he gets near to Me by means of optional prayers until I love him. When I love him, I become his ears with which he hears and his eyes with which he sees and his tongue with which he speaks and his hands with which he touches."(3)

In the Supplication of Abu Hamzah al-Thumali, Imam al-Sajjad ('a) says:

"O my Lord! I ask from You inner and insightful faith, to keep me [on the course of] of steadfast and firm faith so that I may attain true certitude which I cannot attain unless you have written and recorded it for me, and make me content and happy with what you have granted me, O Most Merciful of the Merciful."

Imam al-Sajjad ('a) requests real, steadfast and firm faith which has reached the level of certitude and in reality he is asking for the utmost limit of faith because after that, he says, "true certitude' [yaqin-i sadiq]. The certitude which the Imam

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1- Jami' al-Sa'adat, vol. ۱, p. ۱۲۴.

2- 'Hadith Qudsi' is a hadith that has been revealed by Allah to the Prophet apart from the Qur'an. Hadith qudsi (sacred hadith) are so named because, unlike the majority of hadiths which are Prophetic hadiths, their authority [sanad] is traced back not to the Prophet (S) but to the Almighty. [ed.]

3- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۵۴.

is asking for from Allah is the most important divine grace and blessing under the auspices of true certitude and truth of certitude. Inner belief is attained by man when he conceives no power except the power of the Lord governing the cosmos and he

perceives all matters as dependent on the Divine Essence of Allah, he always sees himself as being in the presence of Allah, he is cautious not to commit unbecoming .deeds and not act contrary to His pleasure

In the hadiths, certitude has been mentioned as one of the greatest divine graces and blessings for man and, as has been previously mentioned, Imam al-Rida ('a) has said, "... there is nothing apportioned less among the servants of Allah than certainty." That .is to say, there are very few people who have attained the level of certitude

:Imam 'Ali ('a) says

No servant has tasted faith until he knows that which has befallen him could not have" passed him by and that which has passed him by could not have befallen him and that (the only granter of loss and benefit is Allah, the Honored and Glorified."(۱

If a person were to attain this degree of certitude and superior understanding that every problem and every blessing that befalls him could not by any means have bypassed him, and whatever did not happen for him, could not possibly have happened, he feels special peace and tranquility in his inner being and tastes the .sweetness of faith

A person who attains this measure

.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۹۷ -۱

of faith, although he seeks material and spiritual pleasures, knows that everything is measured and will come to him at a specific time and it is not true that everything he desires will come to him and whatever he does not like will be avoided. A lot of things which man does not like are decreed for him on the basis of divine expediency and conversely divine expediency often necessitates that what we desire does not come .to us and we cannot attain it no matter how much we strive for it

The Saints [Awliya'] of Allah and Contentment with Allah's Decree

When a person attains certitude, he relinquishes his own desires and sets his eyes on the wishes of Allah and from then on does not spend time on thinking about unattainable aspirations and cravings and makes effort only to perform duties and responsibilities. He preoccupies himself with discerning what Allah wants of him and is pleased with whatever has been decreed. In addition to knowing that which has been decreed will come to pass, the people of certitude [ahl al-yaqin] know that their good .lies in divine decrees; that is to say, they are aware of the best of all possible systems

They know that what Allah has decreed is the best and what has been preordained by divine decree is a part of this best system and that with regard to its special causes, conditions and requisites nothing better than that special phenomenon can occur. Yes, in addition to having conviction that whatever Allah desires will come to

them, people who have attained this degree of knowledge are also happy and have no worries. If affliction befalls them, they are happy and welcome it with joy because they know that their good lies in that which has occurred—this is the station of .[contentment [with what Allah decrees and desires

The station of contentment [maqam-i rida'] is attained by people who believe that all divine decrees are advantageous to man. In this regard, many hadiths have been :related. Imam al-Sadiq ('a) stated

I am surprised at the Muslim for whom Allah, the Honored and Glorified, does not" determine a decree save that there is good for him in it; if his body is cut to pieces with a scissors, it is good for him, and if he is made the owner of the whole world from (the East to the West, it is good for him."(۱

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) says that all decrees which Allah preordains for a believer are good for him, whether they are apparently good or bad. An unpleasant event that occurs for him is for his good either in this world or in the hereafter. A person who attains such knowledge is pleased with what comes to pass and he is not worried for the reason that he has not behaved with negligence in regard to his position of servitude

and he has discharged his duties. He is not perturbed about whether his sustenance will be increased or decreased or about what will befall him. He entrusts his

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.Ibid., p. ۱۰۲ -۱

work to Allah while pursuing his servitude and obedience and he knows from the bottom of his heart that whatever occurs is good and he desires nothing but that.

Such a person perceives all events and occurrences with optimism and he is content with afflictions and problems. He has no grievances when thrown into prison, and according to the expression of the hadiths, he is content even if they were to cut his body to pieces with a scissors for the reason that he conceives his good in that. During the days of the Revolution and the Imposed War, we saw parents, brothers, sisters and wives whose beloved ones were either burnt or badly cut before attaining martyrdom but nevertheless welcomed the event with joy and thanked Allah for allotting them the favor of a martyr!

Contentment with divine decrees and being pleased with what occurs is easy to talk about, but its materialization is very hard. It is very hard to conceive how certain special servants of Allah attain the position of not agonizing over what comes to pass for them, it is not a matter of concern to them what tomorrow brings; they are not worried whether or not they will have sustenance for the morrow.

If their beloved one goes to the battlefront, they are not worried whether he will be killed or not and if he himself is spending his days at the battlefront with those devoted to the way of truth, he is not worried about his

household and family because a person that has a hold on his life and is ready for martyrdom cannot be worried about anything. How good it is when these devoted people safely return home and preserve that special spirit and characteristic and

teach others lessons about sacrifice, contentment with divine will and submission to .Allah

The deceased Mulla Mahdi Naraqi states: "Contentment with the divine will is the highest religious position and the noblest station for those nearest to Allah. A person who enters this door will enter paradise. The importance of the station of contentment reaches such a high degree that it has been related in a hadith that the Noble Prophet (S) said that on the Day of Resurrection, Allah will grant wings to a group from among my followers with which they will fly from their graves towards paradise and they will derive benefit from the pleasures of paradise according to their .wishes

The angels will ask them, 'Have you been stopped for accounting?' They will say, 'There is no accounting for us.' The angels will ask again, 'Have you passed over the bridge over hell?' They will respond, 'We did not see the bridge over hell.' The angels will further ask, 'Have you seen hell?' they will answer, 'We did not see any hell.' The angels will ask them, 'Whose followers are you?' They will answer, 'We are followers '.(of Muhammad (S

The angels will ask them what they did in the world. They will respond, 'We had"

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:two attributes for which Allah granted us this position

One is that we were ashamed to sin in solitude and the second is that we were (contented with what Allah allotted to us'.(۱)"(۲

In regard to a person who has attained the position of contentment [maqam-i rida'], :Allah, the Exalted, states

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّهُ * إِرْجِعِی إِلَی رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَرْضِيَّةً * فَادْخُلِی فِی عِبَادِی * وَادْخُلِی جَنَّتِی

O soul at peace! Return to your Lord, pleased, pleasing! Then enter among my" (servants! And enter my paradise!"(۳

This blessed verse explains that the station of contentment and certainty cause anxiety, worry and distress to depart. One of the qualities of this station is that man is :both pleased with and pleasing to Allah

رَضِیَ اللّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِکَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِیمُ

Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. This is the mighty“ (achievement.”(۴

In regard to the above verse, ‘Allamah Tabataba’i says, “If Allah has described the soul at peace as ‘pleased [with Him]’ [radiyah] and ‘pleasing [to Him]’ [mardiyyah], it is because being at peace and ease with the Lord demands that man has to be pleased with Allah and not complain for the least decree and preordainment that befalls him, whether that decree and preordainment is existential or recorded in His divine law .[‘[shar

For this reason, no annoying event annoys him and no sin swerves his heart and Allah is definitely pleased with a person once he becomes pleased with his Lord because nothing annoys Allah more than the

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Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۰۳, p. ۲۵ -۱
.Jami‘ al-Sa‘adat, vol. ۳, p. ۲۰۲ -۲
.Surat al-Fajr ۸۹:۲۷-۳۰ -۳
.Surat al-Ma’idah ۵:۱۱۹ -۴

exit of His servant from the fold of servitude and he will deserve the pleasure of Allah once he traverses the course of servitude. That is why Allah has used the terms ‘well ”.[pleased’ [radiyah] and ‘well pleasing’ [mardiyyah

Therefore, certitude and peace of mind is attained once a person is well pleased with Allah. Being well pleased with another means that one accepts the qualities and deeds of the other, and a monotheistic person does not become unhappy when he

conceives that all the affairs of the world are under divine control and when he attains the position of contentment because he sees events as having been ordained by Allah .and he perceives their connection with the divine Essence

He knows that no event occurs without the permission of Allah and divine will and providence; in addition to not becoming upset, he becomes pleased because every .event occurs on the basis of divine will and providence

In reality, contentment [rida'] is higher than the station of patience [sabr] because patience is also congruent with unhappiness: man patiently bears an event but that event is bitter for him; however, a person that has attained the position of contentment does not even perceive hardships and problems so as to bear them patiently. On the contrary, all things are good for him, he is pleased with whatever .befalls him and not worried about anything

Earnestly imagining this position is difficult for us—even harder is attaining it! How difficult it is for man to be pleased

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when he is in good health and how much more when he is ill?! Is it possible to be completely satisfied with our possessions when we are wealthy and how can we be pleased with deprivation if we become poor?! Above and beyond this, those who have attained the position of contentment create rapport between the spiritual and psychological state of contentment and deeds that are apparently not compatible .with contentment

Without the least doubt, the Infallible Imams ('a) and Imam al-Husayn ('a) in particular had attained the loftiest degrees of contentment and we observe that on account of their being pleased with Allah, they took the sword and fought to the last breath of their lives because they were displeased with the government of Bani Umayyah. One might ask how it is possible for a person to be pleased and at the same .time displeased with an event that is decreed by Allah

Making a distinction between these two is very hard and man has to attain high levels of perfection in order to separate these levels and aspects one from the other. In explanation, a person should look at matters from different perspectives. On one level he should view these events in regard to their proximate agents becoming displeased with their conduct. A person should be displeased with his sins, oppression, transgressions and treachery and on another level his soul must be happy and .pleased

We will cite an example in order to make this point easier to understand: imagine

that a person has a headache and a doctor prescribes bitter medicine for him. That man will take and drink the medicine because he wants to be in good health. He is pleased with taking the medicine but he is unhappy with its bitterness. If man has a cancer on his hand or leg, he will be pleased with cutting it off his body because if this is not done the cancer will spread to the other parts of his body, but at the same time he is displeased on account of losing a limb of his body and with the pain of the .operation

This very two sided quality and aspect in man is very surprising because in regard to one event, he is able to have two feelings; of course, these two feelings are the result of two different causes: when he conceives that his health will be preserved by taking medicine or cutting off his limb, he becomes happy and he also becomes unhappy on .account of either the bitterness of the medicine or the pain which he has to bear

With regard to the previous example, we say that a person whose knowledge has reached perfection knows that events in the world do not take place without the will of Allah. Therefore, he is upset on account of actions that are carried out by an oppressor which are signs of his lowliness, decadence and existential deficiency. He is upset about why man ought to be so ignorant

and sinful that he commits such indecent acts. Therefore, it is possible for man to have two points of view in regard to one event and react accordingly to the two .perspectives

Believers though have to be pleased with events and occurrences because they know that they take place on the basis of divine will and providence, they know that Allah does not do unwise deeds and He calls for good order in which events occur in their .proper place under proper conditions

When a person knows that Allah, the Wise, does not perform vain and futile deeds, he conceives that whatever happens in this world is part of an orderly and perfect system and for this reason it brings about the perfection of existents of the world and human beings become nearer to Allah under the auspices of various events and attain perfections which are incomparable to worldly pleasures; for this reason, he is optimistic in regard to the whole set of events. From this point of view, he is not even saddened by the martyrdom of the prophets ('a) and Imams ('a) because he knows that they attain higher perfection with their martyrdoms and in addition their .martyrdoms are a cause of progress for the religion

The Doyen of Maetyrs, Imam al-Husayn ('a) attained the loftiest position with his martyrdom. His martyrdom gave fruit to the survival and progress of Islam and also became a means for other human beings to attain spiritual perfection under the auspices of knowing and

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remembering him and distinguishing the proper course of life for prosperity in this world and the hereafter. If he had not become a martyr, neither would he have .attained that high station nor would Islam have become prevalent

We would neither have become believers in the Imams nor would we earn their intercession. It is for this reason that we have to be pleased with his martyrdom and believe that it was a divine decree and a component of the best of all possible systems. However, becoming sorrowful results from the emotional aspect of man's

soul because man is an emotional creature and his emotions necessitate that once a sad thing befalls his beloved one, he too becomes sad.

Weak-minded people cannot separate these aspects one from the other and place them side by side and sometimes their rational and emotional aspects collide with one another and for this reason they cannot strike a balance between them, but those whose souls have become perfect separate these aspects from one another and the separation of these aspects brings about different states in their souls, even with regard to one event that occurs at a specified time. Of course, this is dependent on different levels of the soul such that on one level they become happy and on another level they become sad.

Indeed, people who have attained the station of contentment bear pleasures and displeasures because they perceive them as divine decrees.

A Look at Patience [Sabr] and Its Significance

The stations of contentment, knowledge and certitude are great graces and it

is a magnificent blessing for man to be well pleased with all the decrees of Allah on account of knowing that Allah desires only what is good for him; however, not every person attains these stations and this understanding is not easily achieved.

Much self-edification and effort is required to arrive at these positions. If a person does not attain such high positions, he has to generally know that divine decrees are good and even if bearing hardships and afflictions is difficult for him, he still has to try to be patient and adorn himself with the gem of patience.

A believer who has not arrived at the station of contentment, but is patient in the face of hardships, discharges his duties and does not neglect his obligations even if he does not like those bitter events to take place. If it is time to go to war with the enemy, he goes to war because it is his religious duty even though he is not pleased with the bitter events. He bears the hardships of war although he is not content in the deepest

recesses of his heart. Therefore, for a person who has not attained the position of .contentment, the station of patience [maqam-i sabr] is desirable

Patience is one of the ethical concepts that has been greatly emphasized in Islamic ethics. What is understood from this term is a spiritual state that occurs for particular people during hardships. Different conditions arise for people when faced with .unpleasant events

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Some immediately become anxious and grievous when confronted by problems and this sorrowful state affects their lives and becomes a hindrance in their activities—.these are impatient and fragile people

In contrast, some people are forbearing in the face of hardships and safeguard their peace of mind. Bitter events do not affect their spirits very much—these are patient people. Though these people are not pleased in their hearts with bitter and unpleasant events, they still bear them with patience and equanimity. They do not welcome unpleasant events, their hearts do not desire to go to the battlefront and be martyred. They do not want to walk over landmines, but they go to the battlefront and would never turn their backs on the enemy when duty calls because they patiently .bear dangers

Parents do not want their child to go to war, but when divine duty calls for that, they do not hinder their child and bear patiently the separation of their child knowing that man is built by bearing hardships and such an act is better for them and their child to .secure the prosperity of the hereafter

Sometimes, patience is wrongly interpreted and it is imagined that forbearance in the face of hardships denotes accepting humility and being indifferent in the face of negative events and oppression that is perpetrated against other human beings. This interpretation is incorrect and alien to the true meaning of patience. Patience in Islamic terminology denotes enduring hardships and resistance in the face of things which draw

man towards deviations or towards things that do not bring about our perfection. .That factor is sometimes internal and at other times external

Sometimes, that factor incites man to move on a null and void course, and sometimes it makes him remain stagnant in a futile spot. For example, when hungry, man is inclined to eat, but perhaps food that is given to him is either illegitimate or doubtful. It is here when our instincts incite us to eat the illicit food whereas resistance in the face .of that instinct is a sign of patience

On the battlefield, the enemy is firing from every side and the heart says run away from the war and save your life, but Allah says resist until Islam becomes triumphant. It is here that resistance in the face of the call to flee from the battlefront is termed .patience

Sometimes, an external factor invites a person to something that is not right and that external factor sometimes occurs through other human beings and at other times by means other than human beings which result in divine decree. For example, an earthquake might occur and the roof of the house becomes destroyed. If we safeguard our peace of mind in the face of this event and discharge our duties, we .have displayed patience

The importance of patience becomes clear when we observe the role it plays in life and in human perfection. We conceive that man's perfection is attained by means of ,his volitional actions; that is to say

when a person is faced with two opposing attractions and he chooses that which invites him towards perfection, his essence and perfection becomes manifest when .he chooses that which is pleasing to Allah

Therefore, perfection is accomplished on the scene where two opposing attractions come face to face. It is on these arenas that man has to put in all-out effort and

choose that which is pleasing to Allah. If in this case the motivation of faith and innate disposition is so strong as to invite him to truth, he will have attained his worthy perfection. If, however, the satanic incentive and motivation of the carnal soul is stronger, the person makes errors in the war between these two attractions and goes .in a direction that leads to his fall—and this is the reality of being tested

تَبَارَکَ الَّذِی بِیَدِهِ الْمُلْکُ وَهُوَ عَلَی کُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیرٌ * الَّذِی خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَیَاهَ لِیَبْلُوَکُمْ أَیُّکُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلاً وَهُوَ الْعَزِیزُ الْغَفُورُ

Blessed is He in whose hands is all sovereignty, and He has power over all things. He,“ who created death and life that He may test you [to see] which of you is best in (conduct. And He is the All-mighty, the All-forgiving.”(۱

Indeed, on the course towards our perfection, we are faced with factors which invite us in different directions: rational, spiritual and divine factors invite us in one direction and agents of the carnal soul as well as animal and satanic influences tempt us in another direction. The correct choice is resistance

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.Surat al-Mulk ۶۷:۱-۲ -۱

in the face of agents which incite us towards vanity and futility. Therefore, if our life is .to move in the direction of perfection, we must conjoin it with patience

It has been narrated in a hadith that the Noble Prophet (S) said that the Archangel :Gabriel was asked what patience meant. The Archangel responded

Patience means that you have to be uncomplainingly forbearing and resistant in“ distress in the same way that you persist in happiness. You have to be perseverant in destitution in the same way that you are composed in affluence, and you have to have endurance in illness in the same way that you are calm in health; therefore, a patient person should not complain about his state to human beings on account of what has (befallen him.”(۱

It is befitting of those that have not attained the station of certitude, who can clearly

discern that which has befallen them is good and welcome hardships with happiness, to be patient and ask Allah to provide their needs and be forbearing in deplorable circumstances that come to pass. As we have already said, a person that has attained the station of contentment does not become upset in hardships but he is instead happy and thankful to Allah. If his son is martyred, he says "Praise be to Allah, I wish I had another son to send to the battlefield so that he too would be martyred." Not only does he not become sad, but he becomes proud and delighted and

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۷, p. ۲۰ -۱

thanks Allah for what has happened, but there are many people who have not :attained this position, as Allah, the Exalted, says

... وَقَلِيلٌ مِنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّكُورُ

(And few of my servants are grateful."(۱..."

If those who have not attained the position of contentment uncomplainingly endure deplorable events and thank Allah for whatever comes to pass, Allah grants them the reward of the patient, the firm and the steadfast. They have to be forbearing, not grumble and safeguard their peace of mind hoping that Allah will grant them a .reward

Although hardships are bitter for them, they have to bear that bitterness patiently in the same way that a person who takes bitter medicine does not derive pleasure from it, but knows that he will get better by taking it. It is hard for a person that is forced to lose a limb of his body in an operation to bear it, but because he has no option he .submits to fate and becomes ready to have that limb cut so that he may save his life

The Effects of Preferring the Will of Allah over One's Own Will

With regard to what has been said, some of the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths, with the intention to train and edify people who have desires in their hearts but have

not attained the station of contentment and submission to the will of Allah, give the glad tidings that Allah will grant worldly needs and desires if one chooses piety :[taqwa], and in this regard the Noble Prophet says

O Abu Dharr! Allah, the Blessed"

.Surat Saba' ۳۴:۱۳ -۱

and Exalted, states, 'I swear upon My glory and honor that no servant of Mine prefers My will over his save that I make him free from want and I make his thoughts and "...'efforts devoted to the hereafter

Allah swears in order to emphasize this issue because the purport of His words is not easy to comprehend for the majority of people. Therefore, He swears in order to make people believe this matter. Allah states that if His servant's will conflicts with His will and the servant prefers Allah's will over his own—if man's will is the same as Allah's will, both his desires and the desire of Allah are attained, but the discussion concerns circumstances where man's will is incompatible with Allah's will—Allah guarantees a number of things for his servant: the first thing is that He makes him feel free in his heart from want of other human beings. Of course, mankind is always in need of Allah and there is also a feeling of need for Him in man's heart and this feeling must be in man's heart. Utmost honor and pride for man lies in his conceiving that he .is in extreme need of Allah and not perceiving himself as free from need of Allah

Taking into consideration the fact that man's needs are usually outwardly brought to hand by means of other human beings, he perceives himself to be in need of other human beings. This feeling of needing other people demeans people to the extent

that they feel in need of others and humble themselves to them—sometimes they .feel they have to flatter them for favors and at other times plead to them

If a person's relationship with Allah is strong and he prefers Allah's will and contentment over his own, Allah awakens the spirit of freedom from need of other human beings in him and provides enough means for him to help him attain his needs; of course, those means are intended to make him attain higher aims and goals and one has the duty to make use of those means and be grateful to Allah while deriving benefit from them and if other human beings were among the mediums and means of attaining one's worldly aims and goals, he has to be thankful to them, too. Although a person derives benefit from various means, he only conceives himself as being in .need of Allah and he does see himself in need of any other than Him

The feeling of affluence and freedom from need of other human beings is a great blessing which grants personality to man. Of course, we should not imagine from what has been mentioned that a person should not be modest and humble towards other human beings. A person has to be humble both towards Allah as well as to other people. Some who have little acquaintance with Islamic knowledge imagine that Allah does not want us to have a feeling of abjectness and humility even before Allah Himself! These

.people have not understood Islam and they have vain imaginations about it

The root of Islam is servitude and the peak of man's pride lies in lowliness and humility before Allah and placing one's forehead on the earth and prostrating to Him. Man's utmost perfection lies in perceiving himself as low in the presence of the divine Essence and because Allah desires perfection and ascendancy for man, He has asked him to feel humble in His presence and present his needs to Him because man's .perfection is guaranteed in devotion to Allah

Conversely, man ought not to feel small and low in the face of other human beings nor perceive himself as being in need of them because when he conceives himself in need of them, whether he likes it or not he will feel belittled to the same extent that he feels .in need of them

Man conceives himself as low to the same measure that his affairs lie in the hands of other people. Although he does not admit it in words, he still feels belittled and demeaned in his heart. However, if a believer entrusts his affairs to Allah as a result of his faith and conceives himself only in need of Him, he does not feel any need for other people in his heart though it is possible for Allah to alleviate his needs by means of another one of His servants and want the helped man to be thankful to that other benevolent servant while still perceiving

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.himself as being in need of Allah

It has been narrated in regard to Prophet Abraham ('a) that when Nimrod ordered that a great fire be set and Prophet Abraham ('a) be thrown into the fire that the fire was so intensely hot that no one had the courage to come near it and they were forced to cast the Prophet into the fire from afar by means of a catapult. The :Archangel Gabriel appeared while Abraham was in the fire and asked him

"?Are you in need of any help"

,Abraham responded

"Yes, but not from you."(۱)

Abraham said that he needed help and assistance but not from other than Allah and Allah is also aware of my state of affairs and knows my needs and He will do whatever He deems best in my interests. After victory in this trial, Abraham was appointed to .the rank of intimate and sincere friendship with Allah, the Exalted

Of course, attaining the position of freedom from want of others is not an easy task and man only arrives at such a station with the grace and blessings of Allah, but Allah has placed the requisites for attaining this position at the disposal of man and one of those requirements is that man prefers the will of Allah in affairs concerning his will and the will of Allah and on the first level he must feel in his heart freedom from want .of other human beings

The second point is that he no longer feels worried in regard to

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۲, p. ۳۵ -۱

his worldly affairs, entrusts the good and expediencies of his worldly affairs to Allah, only concerns himself with the hereafter and devotes himself to securing heaven. He is only preoccupied with what his destination will be and with whether he has .discharged his divine duties or not. Hence, he is always worried about the last world

I make the sky and the earth guarantors of his sustenance and I safeguard his“ ”.career and I do trade for him

The third point is that He secures the needs of a person who prefers Allah’s will over .his own will and I make the sky and earth guarantors of his subsistence

The fourth point is that I make him derive profit from his career and compensate for his losses and deficits. Every person chooses a career in his life and earns an income under its auspices and it is natural there is no guarantee for the continuation of a career and profits from it. Where is the guarantee that an orchard will continue producing fruit? Where is the guarantee that cows and herds of sheep will remain alive? Where is the guarantee that a person will not be dismissed from his job? Where is the guarantee that a trader will not make losses? Allah is the Guarantor of profit for .a person who prefers the will of Allah over his own will

The fifth point is that in business and trade He helps him so as not to make losses. People who are always preoccupied with

the world try to deal with people who will give them more profit. They choose dealings and businesses from which they will gain more profit. They are always worried about the possibility of making losses or gaining less. Allah states that He supports and helps a person who prefers His will to man’s personal desires in every business and dealing.

Instead of him thinking and managing and planning with whom and how to do trade .so as to make enormous profit, Allah supports him and safeguards his interests

Thereafter, in reference to the fact that a believer has to have so much certainty that under its auspices he must to be worried about his sustenance and he has to be certain that Allah, the Exalted, will grant him what has been decreed for him, the :Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! If the son of Adam were to run away from his sustenance in the same“ way that he runs away from death, his subsistence will reach him in the same way ”.that death will find him

Man does not like death and he takes flight from it but, in the end, death overtakes him and he finally dies. Likewise, if he runs away from his sustenance, it will reach him and there is no fleeing from what has been decreed for him. If man strives with all his might, it is not clear that his sustenance will be increased. All too often people strive a !lot and still die of hunger

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There are a lot of stories in this regard, and some have narrated that some very rich people were confronted with incidents where they had to eat their shoes during the last moments of their lives in the vain effort to save themselves from extreme hunger and death. On the other hand, there were people who did not work so hard but .attained the great wealth that was decreed for them by Allah

Man must not be remiss in discharging his obligations and in striving to earn a living, and neither should he be lazy on the pretext of belief in divine providence because Allah hates the indolent. However, if a person has the option to choose between various careers, the low income of a particular field should not hinder him and he must believe that the sustenance which Allah has decreed for him will reach him and this must encourage him to seek knowledge with peace of mind because he is sure that subsistence will not be deprived of what has been decreed for him no matter .what path he follows

Lesson ۳۸: Knowing Allah and His Wise Order

Man and His Relationship with Allah

This section of the Noble Prophet's (S) advice is about man's relationship with Allah and attentiveness to Him during hardships and also asking for help from Him while having freedom from need of other human beings. In regard to the first issue, it must be mentioned that man has been created to attain proximity to Allah; therefore, all his activities have to be done with the purpose of

safeguarding this relationship and if one uses his energies to preoccupy himself with .other activities those energies will be wasted

All inner and outward faculties, as well as all blessings, should be employed on the course of this relationship. Without doubt, this course is very expansive and has various forms every one of which is related to one of the aspects of the soul because Allah, the Exalted, has endowed our souls with many aspects, appearances and ranks and all these aspects have been disposed towards a different orientation—but all have to be focused on Allah. It is not plausible for one of our existential aspects to be .oriented towards Allah and for other aspects to be directed elsewhere

Divisions have been made for the existential aspects of man; for instance, it is said that one aspect of man's existence is for his relationship with Allah, another aspect is for his relationship with himself, another is for his relationship with other human .beings and another aspect is for his relationship with other creatures

From the viewpoint of the properties of man's being and the divine laws that that have been enacted for man, this division can be true: that which is discussed in regard to the aspect of the relationship of man with himself, for example, are the things that are beneficial and harmful for his body—such and such a thing is prohibited while such and such a thing is permissible. Some of the divine laws such as prayer and fasting

determine man’s relationship with Allah. Some of the divine laws determine man’s relationship with other human beings, such as how to behave towards parents, .relatives, friends and enemies

These divisions are acceptable, but it has to be borne in mind that these divisions of the aspects of man do not mean that we have another goal besides traversing the course of Allah and moving in the direction of proximity to Him; on the contrary, we have to admit that all our existential aspects—despite wonderful and amazing differences in them—have all been directed at one point; that is to say, that very relationship which man has with other human beings and with other creatures has to .be for Allah

The form of our deeds differs: one form is prayer and another form is teaching or learning and performing daily duties, but all these are only beneficial to us when they are ultimately done for Allah. That is why all of man’s deeds and even his thoughts .have to be for Allah and he has to desire, seek and search for no other except Allah

In addition to the attractions which man has to secure his material needs for this limited life, every person also has attractions towards an unlimited life, a limitless ultimate goal as well as infinite beauty, perfection and power. In reality, man’s existential makeup has been built for an ultimate goal and his instincts have been designed to move in the direction towards the infinite world and that which is confined

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by the world has an introductory aspect and acts as an engine that propels man to .continually move towards Allah

We should bear in mind that that which makes a person truly human is his relationship with Allah for the reason that man’s ultimate perfection lies in this connection with his Lord because this relationship is attained under the auspices of knowledge and sound deeds; in other than this case, man is in the category of other animals, perhaps even :worse than animals

... أُوْلَئِکَ کَالأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ ...

"They are like cattle, rather they are more astray."(١)

Meanwhile, the existence of prophets ('a) and the saints [awliya'] of Allah ('a) and the academic works, precedents, customs and power which they manifested are signs of their relationship with Allah. Of course, it is worth mentioning that from a rational analysis, the existence of every creature is a kind of relationship with the Creator and it is not possible for the created not to be related to its creator, but this relationship is existential and it manifests itself in the whole order of existence.

There is no running away from such a connection and every creature has an existential relationship with Allah. However, besides this existential relationship, man has another distinction. He can perceive this relationship under the auspices of the intellect, conception and awareness and his worth lies in his comprehending this relationship better and deeper.

Usually this knowledge and relationship with Allah is attained by way of acquired knowledge which comes to

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١- Surat al-A'raf ٧:١٧٩.

hand under the auspices of employing the intellect and rational as well as philosophical deduction; however, this cognition is nevertheless not the end of the way for human perfection and it does not take man to the ultimate destination nor does it raise strong belief and faith in him.

Complete understanding is direct knowledge which means that a person reaches a stage where he not only comprehends the connection with Allah with his entire being but also becomes one with that relationship. The goal of religion is to make man attain such a position. It has been narrated that Imam 'Ali ('a) said:

"I never saw a thing save that I witnessed Allah before it, after it and with it."

If this knowledge is not attained in a complete form in this world for a person who is striving to attain perfection, he has to prepare the ground to attain this in a complete manner in the other world. It is for this reason that in the language of religion and in the traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), the relationship with Allah has been interpreted as vision and it has been said that the highest blessing for the people of paradise is that they witness the divine brilliance according to the measure of their personal perfection. It is always feasible for those who have attained the highest stations of perfection to witness these lights and these divine manifestations are lesser for .people who are at lower levels of perfection

It has been

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narrated that there once was a religious scholar who was on the verge of death. One of his relatives saw him in a dream and asked him, “In that world, do you visit the Pure Imams (‘a) and especially Imam al-Husayn (‘a)?” The scholar responded, “What are you saying? In this world there is a distance of thirty years between us and the Doyen of Martyrs (‘a). For this reason, one has to wait for thirty years in order to be ”.(permitted to visit Imam al-Husayn (‘a

Truly, we have to realize where our hearts lie because the degree of a person’s worth is equal to what he entrusts his heart to—one whose heart is attached to his orchard and house is worthy to that same measure, but if he entrusts his heart to Allah and becomes attached to Him, his worth becomes infinite and he no longer becomes confined to the transitive limitations of the world and he becomes detached from all .things and all people except Allah

Therefore, man’s real value is dependent on his relationship with Allah and gaining proximity to Him, not to material pleasures and possessions. Man’s humanity lies in his conception and inner attention to Allah. We should observe where our hearts are attached because to whatever extent our connection with Allah is deeper and our relationship with Him is stronger, when we pass away from this perishable world the divine lights will manifest more strongly and we will derive more benefit from the

graces and

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:blessings of Allah. The Noble Prophet (S) has said

O Abu Dharr! Should I not teach you words by means of which Allah will grant you" benefit?" I said, "Yes, O Prophet of Allah!" He said, "Safeguard your relationship with ".Allah so that He may preserve His relationship with you

All the advice that has been mentioned up to now was beneficial, but the reason the Noble Prophet (S) draws Abu Dharr's attention to this point by saying that he will tell him something by means of which Allah will grant him benefit is indicative of the fact these words are a summation of the previous sayings and have special importance. The Noble Prophet (S) draws Abu Dharr's attention to the fact that Allah has existentially created a relationship between Himself and His servant. He has initiated a link of relationship between the great position of Divinity and His servant as insignificant human being; therefore, we must safeguard this connection and never .let it come to an end. If we safeguard this relationship, Allah too will protect us

What prosperity and grace is greater than that an insignificant human being should be in connection and relationship with the Lord of the worlds? For this reason, man must endeavor to preserve this association and other graces will always come to him under the auspices of this relationship. If he does not endeavor to protect it and fails to discharge the duties of servitude, he ought not to expect to receive the graces and blessings

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.of Allah, the Exalted

Perhaps there are ambiguities for some people in regard to how there can be a relationship worthy of safeguarding between Allah and me [a human being]; what relationship can exist between me—a lowly person who lives on this earth—and Allah, the Exalted, and the divine Throne? In order to remove this ambiguity, the Noble

:Prophet (S) says

".Safeguard this relationship so as to perceive Him in your presence"

That is to say there is no distance between you and Allah and He is always in your :presence and never separated from you

... وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

"And He is with you wherever you may be. And Allah sees what you do."(1)

Therefore, if a human being wants to be eligible to receive the blessings of Allah, the Exalted, so as to be protected from afflictions, whisperings of the devil as well as temptations of the soul [safeguarding in the words of the Noble Prophet (S) includes protecting man from every danger, whether material or spiritual], he has to guard his .relationship with Allah and never let it become weak

Attentiveness to Allah in Difficulty and Ease

:Thereafter, the Noble Prophet (S) states

"Acquaint yourself with Allah when you are in a state of affluence so that He may ".know you when you are in a state of poverty

Because Allah has infinite power and everything that takes place in the world is a result of His will and nothing is outside of the realm of His will, man must pay attention to Allah in every

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1- Surat al-Hadid ۵۷:۴.

state. When a person is in hardships and difficulties, he should only look to Allah for help and ask Him to alleviate his problems and conversely when he is in a situation of prosperity, he should pay heed to Allah because He has put the blessing of affluence .and ease at his disposal

It is natural that man pays attention to Allah when he finds himself entangled in :hardships and unpleasant events; in regard to the polytheists, Allah states

فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِی الْفُلْکِ دَعَوُا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِینَ لَهُ الدِّینَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَی الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ یُشْرِکُونَ

When they board the ships, they invoke Allah putting exclusive faith in Him, but when" (He delivers them to land, behold, they ascribe partners [to Him]."(۱)

It is really no big deal when a person seeks out Allah in times of hardships when waves of calamities besiege him from every side [even the most committed atheists call out to Allah when they feel death near]. Of course, there are some people who have been so driven away from the proximity of Allah that they do not pursue Him even when overwhelmed by hardships, but a person in whose heart there is even a bit .of faith at least seeks out Allah in times of hardships and tribulations

The Noble Prophet (S) states that if you want Allah to respond to your calls when you call upon Him, you must safeguard your relationship with Him in times of affluence and be acquainted with Him because if you become remote

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.Surat al-'Ankabut ۲۹:۶۵-۶۶ -۱

from him during your days of ease, you should not expect His response to your calls during your days of tribulation. Remember Allah during your days of ease and .affluence in order for Him to remember you when you are in hardships

All of us, to a greater or lesser extent, have been afflicted in our lives by hardships as well as tribulations from which we have been liberated after some time, but we easily forgot the blessing of liberation and the ease which followed after those hardships despite the fact that afflictions and tribulations are meant to awaken us and bring about attentiveness to Allah and understanding of the value of the blessings that we .possess

If we are confronted by dangerous circumstances and all the doors are shut before us

except the danger that is threatening us and all of a sudden help comes our way and we are delivered, we ought to learn a lesson from the experience. Do we assume the occurrence was accidental? No, nothing is accidental in life—all events are blessings .of Allah and His grace and blessings save us from danger

In the system of creation whatever takes place is a result of the divine will and nothing occurs without having been willed by Allah. If blessings are granted to man or affliction is repelled from him, all these things take place as a result of the will of Allah. He makes the means and conditions available, whether those conditions are common or uncommon and whether

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we realize them or not. It is Allah who is continually granting us sustenance, whether by common means such as work and trade, or unnatural means such as manna (a special food delivered) from heaven. Alleviation of man's problems is also performed .by Allah, whether by natural or unnatural means

In one method of division people can be categorized in three groups in regard to their :attention to Allah

The first group is those who pay attention to Allah whether in hardships and tribulations or in affluence and ease. In the expression of the Qur'an, they remember :Allah morning and evening—at all times, not only in times of hardships

وَاذْکُر رَّبَّکَ فِی نَفْسِکَ تَضَرُّعاً وَخِیفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِن الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالآصَالِ وَلاَ تَکُنْ مِن الْغَافِلِینَ

And remember your Lord within your heart beseechingly and reverentially, without" (being loud morning and evening, and do not be among the heedless."(١

فِی بُیُوتٍ أَذِنَ اللَّهُ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَیُذْکَرَ فِیهَا اسْمُهُ یُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِیهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالآصَالِ

(In houses Allah has allowed to be raised and wherein His name is celebrated."(٢"

The secret behind the fact that this group remembers Allah all the time is that they are not heedless of Him despite all the blessings He has granted and that they

perceive themselves as being in need of Allah at least for the continuance of their blessings. Also, because they understand their need towards Allah, as per their various levels, blessings and afflictions make no difference for them. These are worthy servants who constantly remember Allah and they are

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۱- Surat al-A'raf ۷:۲۰۵.

۲- Surat al-Nur ۲۴:۳۶.

reciprocally objects of Allah's attention.

The second group of people includes the majority of believers. These are people who, to a greater or lesser extent, become afflicted by negligence when they are in a state of welfare but awaken and show their need for Allah when problems and tribulations overcome them. This group also comprises relatively good servants, but Allah complains in regard to them as to why they are negligent when they are granted blessings and return when they are deprived of His graces.

وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الإِنسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَأى بِجَانِبِهِ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَذُو دُعَاءٍ عَرِيضٍ

"When We bless man, he is disregardful and turns aside; but when an ill befalls him, he makes protracted supplications."(۱)

The third group of people is the group which does not seek Allah in any circumstance or state. Some people belonging to this group believe that afflictions are in fact sent by Allah. They perceive afflictions as either arising from unnatural causes or that they are a sign of the anger and wrath of Allah such as the people of Yunus (Jonah) who repented when divine retribution was decreed for them. They turned to Allah and repented because they knew that divine retribution was a sign of Allah's wrath.

Allah too delivered them from affliction on account of their repentance and belief. This group of people does not turn to Allah when afflicted by problems which they do not perceive as coming from Allah. Allah has thus reproached this group of people:

فَلَوْلا إِذْ جاءهُمْ بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوا

.Surat Fussilat ۴۱:۵۱ -۱

وَلَكِنْ قَسَتْ قُلوبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُم الشَّيْطَانُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Why did they not humble themselves when Our punishment overtook them! But their" hearts had hardened, and Satan had made to seem decorous to them what they had (been doing."(۱

:Elsewhere, Allah has stated

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُم مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِىَ كَالْحِجَارَهِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَهً وَإِنَّ مِن الْحِجَارَهِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَّقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاء وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَهِ اللّهِ وَمَا اللّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

When your hearts hardened after that; so they were like stones, or even harder, for" indeed there are some stones from which streams gush forth, and indeed there are some of them that split, and water issues from them, and indeed there are some of (them that fall for fear of Allah. And Allah is not oblivious of what you do."(۲

The Need to Seek Assistance from Allah

Thereafter, with regard to the fact that man must ask only from Allah and never turn :to other than Him, the Holy Prophet (S) says

If you want to make a request from Allah, make it and whenever you want to seek" help from someone, ask for Allah's help because the pen has already written what will ".".occur until the Day of Resurrection

It is normal for man to have needs and not have the ability to solve all of them. In addition, he cannot secure all of his needs and whether he likes it or not, he must ask for help from others. The Noble Prophet (S) tells Abu Dharr that when it

.Surat al-An'am ۶:۴۳ -۱
.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۷۴ -۲

is necessary for you to ask for help from someone, instead ask from Allah. When you notice that you have needs which you are unable to meet and you are obliged to ask for help, ask for help from Allah because there is no one who is more aware about your needs than Him and there is no one more capable of solving your problems than .Him

The reason for this is because the whole of creation belongs to Him and His power encompasses everything and if He desires a thing to happen, He only wills and decrees it and it occurs. In addition to all this, Allah, the Exalted, loves His creatures more than anyone else and desires only what is good for them and it is for this reason .that He has ordered His slaves to request only from Him

It is natural that once Allah opens the door of supplication and invocation for human beings, He is ready to respond and accept those supplications and in addition, He always includes man in the fold of His blessings. There is no doubt that one of His blessings is deliverance of man from afflictions and repulsion of hardships. When a person is entangled in problems, Allah delivers him from those hardships and sometimes Allah repels calamities even before they befall a person. Human beings are always indebted to the graces and love of Allah and must know that only Allah is able to help them and that nothing occurs in

the cosmos except with His permission; therefore, it is only from Him that help should .be sought

:Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states

When any one of you desires to receive all that you ask of your Lord, he has to lose" hope in the people and only put his hopes in that which is in the possession of Allah. When Allah, the Honored and Glorified, sees this in his heart, He grants him whatever

(he asks."(۱)

Every Muslim says, "And to you alone do we turn for help" at least ten times a day in daily prayers, but we do not behave this in deed and perhaps many of our actions are indicative that we do not seek help only from Allah but instead seek help from other .human beings

Of course, there are some people who are honest in regard to seeking help only from Allah and they are truthful when they say, "You alone do we worship and to you alone do we turn for help" and they are really sincere in their worship and devotion to Him and only seek help from Him; however, most of us are not sincere in our devotion to Allah and ask for help from other human beings. In hardships we expect our parents, brothers, sisters and friends to help us and sometimes we even publicly declare our .hope and trust in them

The Noble Prophet (S) advises us to only ask from Allah and only seek His help and after that he draws Abu Dharr's attention

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۲۱۹ -۱

to divine decree and providence. As has been previously explained, one of the benefits of belief in divine decree and providence is that when ease, wealth or any good comes man's way, he does not become overjoyed and conversely if hardships and unpleasant events befall him, he does not become unusually upset because he knows that whatever takes place is in accordance with divine decree and there is no :escaping from it not to mention that all occurrences are in man's best interests

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِى الأَرْضِ وَلاَ فِى أَنفُسِكُمْ إِلاَّ فِى كِتَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ نَّبْرَأَهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ * لِكَيْلاَ تَأْسَوْا عَلَى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلاَ تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ ...

No affliction visits the earth or yourselves but it is in a Book before we bring it about"
—that is indeed easy for Allah—so that you may not grieve for what escapes you, nor

(exult for what comes your way."(1)

One of the benefits of belief in divine decree is that man always places his hope in Allah because he knows that everything is preordained by Him and He can change His decrees and other human beings are not capable of significant influence; hence, there is no benefit in putting faith in them. If an unpleasant event takes place and hardships befall a person, he knows that Allah, the Exalted, has decreed that event out of wisdom or, if something is taken from him, he knows that it has been written in the guarded tablet and on the

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١- Surat al-Hadid ٥٧:٢٢-٢٣.

basis of Allah's wise management, such events have to take place.

Therefore, a person does not become devastated and beseech Allah to ask Him to repel those hardships and problems. If a blessing has been allotted to us, we ought not to become overjoyed and proud and forget Allah counting it as our own accomplishment; on the contrary, we should become more aware of Allah, thank Him for freely granting us blessings and guard our state of humility in His presence. We must not be like Korah [Qarun] and conceive blessings as the fruit of our own efforts and endeavors:

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ عِنْدِی أَوَ لَمْ يَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَکَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِن الْقُرُونِ مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرُ جَمْعًا...

"He said, 'I have indeed been given [all] this because of the knowledge that I have.' Did he not know that Allah had already destroyed before him some generations more powerful than him and greater in amassing [wealth]..."(1)

Everyone must know that what he has been allotted is on the basis of divine decree and that Allah has also provided all means in the world; therefore, if it is necessary to ask for someone's help, one must ask for help from Him in whose hands lie all affairs, everything happens by His decree and He can change His decrees if He deems it

expedient. A supplicant must open his hands in entreaty before Allah and trust only in .Him

When calamity and affliction come to pass, a believer

.Surat al-Qasas ۲۸:۷۸ -۱

must not become upset because affliction occurs on the basis of a wise and calculated course of events. For this reason, a person ought not to grieve and moan. Allah will not be dissuaded from His perfect system of management of affairs by our moaning .and grieving

If a blessing has been granted, one must not imagine that it has been attained on account of cleverness. Divine decree and the wise management of Allah brought about that grace and it is also a test to try the people as to how they use that blessing. Therefore, one of the benefits of belief in divine decree and providence is that man understands that whatever comes to pass is a result of wise management and if he sees some deficiencies and inadequacies, he ought not to be very sad for the reason that he knows that the One who has set this system up and manages this decree is more aware of His deeds than him and He knows what is good and expedient for His servants. Taking what has been mentioned into consideration, after advising Abu Dharr to ask for help from Allah, the Noble Prophet (S) brings his attention to divine :decrees

".".Because the pen has already written what will occur until the Day of Resurrection"

Previously we mentioned, and now we emphasize, that we must not take advantage of the issue of divine decree, predetermination and divine knowledge. We must not imagine that what has been decreed to occur will come to

pass and we cannot do anything about it, and therefore pull ourselves aside and shirk

.our responsibilities and duties

We have to know that our movement and effort too is one of the divine decrees; for this reason, we ought to make more effort at discharging our duties and not imagine that we can shirk our responsibilities by depending on divine decree. This is one of the .devil's temptations

Belief in divine decree and providence ought to make a person pay even more attention to Allah and only seek Him and no one else. One must never evade his duties in order to attain goals nor be deceived by the devil imagining that everything has .been preordained, and therefore there is nothing that can be done

One cannot say, "Let's go and sit in seclusion in a corner." Or, if they are students, quit studying. One cannot say that he will become a scholar whether he studies or not. The truth is that, if it was decreed for one to become a scholar, he will become one, but by studying. Of course, it is not possible for knowledge to be granted to man without himself striving and making effort, which is itself Allah's grace and sometimes it is .allotted to man, but in any case man has to make effort and strive

:In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) emphasizes his previous words thus

If all human beings strive to benefit you with something which Allah has not written" down (decreed) for you, they will

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not have the ability to do so and in the same way if all the people strive to harm you with something which has not been preordained for you, they will not have the ability ".to do so

If the will of Allah, the Exalted, makes the occurrence of something incumbent, all the :conceivable powers of the universe cannot prevent it

... وَاللّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَى أَمْرِهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ

"(And Allah has full command of His affairs, but most people do not know."(١)

:In another verse, He sates

وَإِنْ يَمْسَسْکَ اللّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلاَ کَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلاَّ هُوَ وَإِنْ يَمْسَسْکَ بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلَى کُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدُيرٌ

Should Allah visit you with some distress, there is nothing to remove it except Him,“ (and should He bring you some good, then He has power over all things.”(۲

Therefore, the final decision and irrefutable will is Allah's, so if a person wants something they must ask Him who has such will and power and never go after people who are in need of someone else's help like oneself and are unable to do anything. .We must understand that no one can help us unless it is Allah's will that they do so

Results of Knowledge and Certitude in Regard to the Wise Management of Allah

The last point the Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr about is that if he were to possess the level of certitude it would be very beneficial for him. One must have certitude that what Allah has decreed will come to pass and what has not been decreed will not occur as well as having certitude

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۱- ۱۲:۲۱ Surat Yusuf.
۲- ۶:۱۷ Surat al-An'am.

that things that have been decreed are not futile and occur as the result of wise .management

With this knowledge and awareness, a believer is sure whatever takes place is for his good because Allah does not desire what is harmful for his servant, especially the slave who has entrusted his affairs to Allah. He strives with peace of mind to perform his duties and he knows that what takes place is in agreement with divine wisdom and is beneficial and expedient for him, whether it is apparently pleasing or not. He knows that whatever happens on the basis of divine decree is beneficial and there is nothing .detrimental in divine decrees

Naturally, if man were to attain this kind of certitude and spiritual knowledge and conceive all events and occurrences of the universe as beneficial and in conformity with the wise management of Allah, he will be pleased with what happens and sure that what has taken place is for his own good and man is happy with good and it is not .possible for him to be displeased

Of course, this certitude, awareness and lofty faith is not easily attained. Not every person can establish such faith in their hearts nor has every person the ability to attain this station. A person who wants to obtain such a position has to strive on the course of edification of character and embellishment of his inner self and attain a level .where he is in complete control of his soul

He must

achieve lofty stations and positions by doing what Allah has enjoined and taking lessons from the precepts of the saints [awliya'] of Allah and by always preferring the will and contentment of Allah over his own desire and contentment. It is obvious that earning this standard is not possible for every person and the Noble Prophet (S) advises that if a person cannot manage to gain such spiritual knowledge and certitude where he perceives that all that happens to be good and beneficial to him and not become despairing when confronted by adversities, at least he ought to be patient .and persevering when faced with bitter and unpleasant events

He has to know that there is no benefit in being impatient with that which is destined to take place and no matter how impatient he is, whatever Allah desires will come to .pass and there is nothing that can be done to prevent it

If adversity such as illness, poverty, earthquakes, floods or any other events befall man and ravage his life and he bears them with patience and endurance, he becomes the object of Allah's blessings. Of course, if an event is foreseeable and can be prevented by strategic thinking, man has the duty to avert it, but all too often even the most advanced countries, with modern equipment at their disposal, are often

.confronted by unforeseen calamities and events that they lack the power to forestall

As is well known, Japan is the most earthquake prone country in the

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world and the Japanese have built the strongest earthquake resistant buildings and acquired much equipment for relief for those hit by earthquakes because they have a lot of experience in this field. In spite of all this, we see that the most deplorable earthquakes in the world have hit Japan and have inflicted more damage on that country than the damage inflicted by earthquakes which have hit some backward .countries

Therefore, events are preordained and they happen while people are unaware of them and are controlled by the manager of this cosmos and it is He who knows when, how and where any event is going to take place; He knows where an earthquake or flood should occur. It is possible, God forbid, for a calamity to befall ourselves too, but if we have certitude and faith in the wise management of Allah, we will not become upset because we think well of divine decrees and conceive everything as beneficial .and expedient

When we see some weaknesses and deficiencies in an affair, we become angry but if we perceive things as always beneficial in some way, there is no way we can become saddened by them. It is possible for a person to be bothered by some pain or illness, but once he conceives that the pain or illness is good for him in some way, he welcomes it overall. For example, a person whose tooth has become decayed and he must remove it willingly welcomes the operation and pays money

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for it because he perceives this to be good for him and he does not become saddened because he understands it to be good generally because the removal of his tooth will .improve his overall health

Sometimes, a person has an illness that forces him to go abroad for treatment and as

a result spends large sums of money or is forced to have a part of his body amputated in an operation and must even give his consent to such; however, this does not mean that he is pleased with those things or that he has no qualms about them. It is likely that he is in fact quite displeased and even complains about them to Allah, as many people of weak faith do who lose patience whenever a calamity befalls them. It is in :regard to this issue that the Noble Prophet (S) states

Therefore, if you manage to perform a duty for Allah with contentment and certitude,“ do it and if you do not manage to do what you dislike with contentment and certitude, there is much good in patience and forbearance. Success is accompanied by patience and deliverance is accompanied by sorrow and sadness and verily there is ease after ”.every hardship

You are truly blessed if you manage to attain the greatest human station, contentment, because the best station and human attribute is that man should be pleased with divine decrees and happy from the deepest recesses of his heart and never have complaints. Of course, contentment is

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attained under the auspices of certitude and these two [contentment and certitude] have a very close relationship with one another because one who has not attained .certitude cannot become content with divine decrees

Therefore, strive to conduct yourself on the basis of contentment and certitude, in which case bitter and sweet events will become equal for you and you will have neither sorrow nor complaint. However, if you do not attain this position and you do not manage to find any justification to feel pleased when unease and unpleasant occurrences come to pass, try to be patient, do not grumble or complain, and .safeguard your peace of mind

If you cannot manage to be pleased in regard to those unpleasant events in the recesses of your heart, understand that you have not managed to attain the position of contentment due to insufficient knowledge so do not be impatient because

impatience has no benefit and improve your intellect and faith. Know that if you .persevere when faced with hardships, Allah will grant you much good

The Role of Hardships in the Process of Man's Perfection and Spiritual Ascendance

In order to emphasize his saying, the Noble Prophet (S) states that success is guaranteed by patience and forbearance, every sorrow and problem is accompanied by deliverance and every hardship goes along with ease. In the Qur'an too Allah, the :Exalted, states

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا * إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

(Indeed ease accompanies hardship. Indeed ease accompanies hardship."(۱)"

In the Gracious Qur'an very few issues have been repeated twice, what is more with the word 'indeed' [inna]. This

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.Surat al-Sharh (or Inshirah) ۹۴:۵-۶ -۱

is indicative of the regard and grace of Allah in regard to the issue. In the above-quoted verse Allah states that every hardship is accompanied by ease, not that after every hardship comes ease; it seems as if ease has been concealed in the very core .of hardships

In Surat al-Sharh (or al-Inshirah) Allah consoles the Noble Prophet (S), who it seems had been upset, with a kind tone and makes him feel at ease by reminding him about how Allah removed the heavy burden of hardships from his shoulders and changed the hardships into ease. Thereafter, he states that every hardship and pain is accompanied by ease. For this reason, if you find ease embark upon endeavor once more and restart your striving. In reality, Allah hints at this point that hardships and problems are a prerequisite for all of man's perfection and progress and grant him :vigor and therefore afflictions and problems are necessary for perfection

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الإِنسَانَ فِی کَبَدٍ

(Certainly, We created man in distress."(۱"

This verse is indicative of the important role of hardships and ordeals in building man and in his perfection and if this were not true, Allah who is the fountainhead of mercy and kindness and desires prosperity and good for His servants would not have .created man in toil and difficulty

In addition to what has been said, Allah always appraises His servants in order for the worthy to be distinguished and known and in this regard He has made two programs for training and

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۱- ۹۰:۴ Surat al-Balad.

edifying human beings: one is the legislation of acts of worship and the other is the institution of existential afflictions and problems. Ultimately, those who appropriately follow divine injunctions and endure hardships are guided to mercy and divine :knowledge

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّکُمْ بِشَیْءٍ مِن الْخَوفْ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِن الأَمَوَالِ وَالأنفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِینَ * الَّذِینَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُم مُصِیبَهٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَیْهِ رَاجِعونَ

We will surely test you with a measure of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth, lives," and fruits; and give good news to the patient—those who, when an affliction visits (them, say, 'Indeed we belong to Allah, and to Him indeed we return'."(۱

:Imam al-Baqir ('a) states

Allah shows kindness to His servant and bestows him with afflictions in the same way" (that a man returning from a journey brings presents for his family."(۲

The Noble Prophet (S) was invited to the house of one of the Muslims, when he entered his house, he saw a chicken that had laid an egg on top of a wall and that egg

was bound to a nail and was not falling, the Noble Prophet (S) was surprised by this. The owner of the house said, "Are you surprised? I swear upon the Allah who appointed you to the Prophetic mission that no affliction has ever befallen me." When the Noble Prophet (S) heard this sentence, he got up and left the house without partaking of any food and said, "A person that has never faced hardships is not the object of Allah's

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۱- Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۵۵-۱۵۶.

۲- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۳۵۴.

grace."

For this reason, if we correctly look at affliction, we realize that hardships and trials play an instructive and awakening role. Adversity awakens as well as puts on guard sleeping and immobile people and motivates them to be self-determined and strong-willed and in truth hardships make man resistant and unsusceptible. The quality of the life of this world is that it is accompanied by hardships and in this regard the more man's resistance increases, the more is his perfection and bit by bit his intelligence and natural capabilities blossom more and this is indicative of divine grace and blessings.

... سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا

"...Allah will bring about ease after hardship."(۱)

This verse is addressed to people of insufficient capabilities who lose hope when they are faced with problems and imagine that the world has come to an end. They forget to supplicate and seek the help of Allah and His saints [awliya'] and they perceive all doors as closed unto them.

A believer must not lose himself when faced with problems, and must safeguard his peace of mind and know that after every hardship is ease. Allah, the Exalted, has not

decreed that His servant will be faced with hardships all the time. On the contrary, .Allah has made ease and comfort accompany hardships

Lesson ٣٩: The Criteria of Value In the Words of Allah, the Exalted

point

As has been observed, the central point of the previous discussions was piety. In those discussions the importance of piety as well as its effects in the life of man and also its benefits

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.Surat al-Talaq ۶۵:۷ -١

in the hereafter were mentioned and because it is possible for some to develop wrong conceptions about piety and not distinguish real piety from outward or pretensive piety, in this discussion the criteria for evaluating deeds and behavior will be .discussed

A lot of people are used to judging people on the basis of their outward appearance. If a person prays and recites invocations and the Glorious Qur'an often especially if he performs his obligatory prayers on time and observes issues of ritual purification, he is considered to be pious. This conception is superficial and incorrect and in order for the criteria of the value and superiority of man to be known, scholars of ethics have put forward a theoretical and fundamental discussion in regard to the criteria of the goodness and badness of deeds and the value of man that will be dealt with in this .section

Faith and Good Deeds, The Criteria of Man's Superiority

The value of man from the viewpoint of the Qur'an lies in faith and righteous deeds and perhaps there are very few pages in the Qur'an where these two issues have not :been mentioned

وَأَمَّا مَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُ جَزَاءً الْحُسْنَى وَسَنَقُولُ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِنَا يُسْرًا

But as for him who has faith and acts righteously, he shall have the best reward, and"
(we will speak to him gently of our command."(1)

:Elsewhere, it states

إِلاَّ مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُوْلَئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّهَ وَلاَ يُظْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا

except those who repent, believe, and act righteously. Such will enter paradise, and…"
they will not be wronged in

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.Surat al-Kahf ۱۸:۸۸ -۱

(the least."(1)

Human beings have two reciprocal stations: one station is related to the pious and possessors of virtue; that is to say the prophets, the righteous [salihan], the saints [awliya'], the sincere [siddiqin] and the martyrs, and it is because of this station that the Prophet Adam ('a) became the object of prostration for the angels and that man :attains a position where he is described thus

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِى جَنَّاتٍ وَنَهَرٍ * فِى مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ مَلِيكٍ مُقْتَدِرٍ

Surely the pious shall be in gardens and rivers, in the abode of truthfulness with an"
(Omnipotent King."(2)

The reciprocal station is the position of downfall, degradation and remoteness from Allah. When an individual refrains from servitude and worshiping Allah and discharging personal and social duties and, in short, once he abstains from fulfilling his human role and traverses the course of decadence, he reaches a position lower than :animals

... لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لاَ يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لاَ يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لاَ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُوْلَئِكَ كَالأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ ...

They have hearts with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which"

they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear; They are like cattle; rather, they are more astray."(۳)

Therefore, the value of man lies in paying heed to the divine and spiritual aspects of his self which spring from the heart and incline to the other members of the body. The tongue has a share in remembrance of Allah, the eyes have a

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۱- Surat Maryam ۱۹:۶۰.
۲- Surat al-Qamar ۵۴:۵۴-۵۵.
۳- Surat al-A'raf ۷:۱۷۹.

share in reciting the verses of the Glorious Qur'an, the ears have a share in listening to the truth and the hands as well as legs have a share in moving along the path of Allah.

Accordingly, if we notice that in the Glorious Qur'an many recommendations have been made about remembrance of Allah, it is because human life does not have value without remembrance of Allah and it is only by this means that a person can attain the status of nearness to Allah.

Islam and all the divine religions believe in these two infinite opposing positive and negative values. This is something that is not conceivable by means of ordinary human standards and can only be understood and justified according to divine criteria. In addition, Islam believes not only in these criteria for man's lifetime but also for every moment of one's life; that is to say, Islam says that within one hour man can make the value of his life reach its peak. Within one hour man can make himself prosperous forever and attain eternal and infinite bliss or can make himself villainous and wretched within that same hour.

Therefore, the criterion of value in Islam, is the competence and worthiness of an individual and his righteous intention and from the viewpoint of Islam even the benefits that a person grants to society are not a standard of measure even if the

value that the society has placed on that person is equal to the benefits that the

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person has imparted to the society. All too often, it is possible that the value which a society grants to an individual is not only refuted by Islam, but Islam may also grant that person negative value due to the fact that the individual is corrupt inside and has a reprehensible and contaminated interior covered by a deceptive outward appearance.

For this reason, it is possible for an individual to confer many benefits upon the society, but to be ill-fated himself, like a scholar that teaches religious sciences and from whom others derive benefit and attain prosperity but he himself suffers misfortune because he does not practice what he preaches and ends up in the hellfire. Or a rich man who spends his wealth for the society and alleviates the needs of the deprived with the intention of attaining fame, power and position.

Without the least doubt, from the viewpoint of Islam his deeds have no value whatsoever. That which grants value to man's existence and deeds is his relationship with eternity and the infinite world. This relationship is a relationship that comes from the heart and is attained under the auspices of a righteous intention and attentiveness of the heart to Allah.

Therefore, if deeds are performed for the sake of Allah, they have infinite value whether they are visibly small or large. In addition, it is natural that the more man's knowledge about Allah increases and the purer his intention becomes, the greater his own value becomes.

Reciprocally, the more

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the purity of his intention decreases and the more his intention is to draw the attention of people and popularity as well as gain social position, the more the value of his deeds decreases even if his deeds are innumerable. We draw the conclusion

that that which grants value to man is in reality attentiveness to Allah. If a person remembers Allah, his deeds have been performed for Him but in other than this case, it is not possible for him to do anything for Allah and as a result his acts are not .valuable

Worthwhile Deeds from the Viewpoint of Islam

A lot of people imagine that the more value a deed has for the society, the more its spiritual value and the more effective it is for spiritual ascendance and perfection of man. They imagine that a deed that has benefit for human beings has also been done for Allah or has been performed in Allah's way and for this reason they pay more .attention to the 'bigness' of a deed

They say that such and such a person has spent so much from his wealth to build a hospital or mosque. This conception is very superficial. It is true that one of the criteria of a good deed is for it to be beneficial for people, but it is not true that every good deed that is beneficial for the people leads to a person's perfection. A deed leads to perfection when, in addition to being beneficial, the motive and intention of the performer of

.that deed are sound, constructive and totally for the sake of Allah

From the viewpoint of Islam, the standard for a Godly deed that is effective in the spiritual ascendance and perfection of man is not simply being beneficial. The criterion for such a deed is that it ought to be done for the pleasure of Allah, and divine .motivation has to compel one to do the deed

Even so, one of the criteria for the goodness and soundness of a deed is its being beneficial for others and every person's deeds are more valuable when they serve .the society

What is meant by the assertion that a deed ought to be done in the way of Allah is that a deed has to be set on a path and direction whose destination is Allah and as long as

the goal is not Allah, the means or process is also not Divine. If the aim is to draw the attention of people, the course also is for the sake of attracting the attention of people. A deed is done for Allah and in His way when the performer pays attention to Allah at the time of performing it and this is feasible for one who knows Allah and .understands the value of nearness to Him

By accurately studying the verses of the Gracious Qur’an, we realize that often deeds which are good in our point of view have not only been reproached by the Qur’an, but .have been considered as lowly and mean

One of those deeds is spending on other people, which we consider to be a good deed .and we praise a man when we see him providing philanthropic services to the poor

However, philanthropists that do not have a pure intention have been reproached in the Gracious Qur’an. They will be remorseful on the Day of Resurrection and will regret that they spent their wealth to draw the attention of others. It is possible that people praise someone in the world and stick his picture on doors and walls or even build a statue in his memory in order for all the people to remember him as a :philanthropist, but the Holy Qur’an states in his regard

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لاَ تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُم بِالْمَنِّ وَالأذَى كَالَّذِى يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلاَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لاَ يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللّهُ لاَ يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

O you who have faith! Do not render your charities void by reproaches and affronts,“ like those who spend their wealth to be seen by people and have no faith in Allah and the Last Day. Their parable is that of a rock covered with soil: a downpour strikes it, leaving it bare. They have no power over anything of what they have earned, and (Allah does not guide the faithless lot.”(۱

If spending on other human beings is done for ostentation and sanctimony and not on the basis of faith in Allah and the Last

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۶۴ -۱

Day, it has no value whatsoever and the example of such a sanctimonious person is like that of a person who instead of planting his seeds on fertile land, sows it on a hard rock and covers it with a handful of soil and waits for it to grow, become green and reap produce from it!

He is heedless of the fact that once a violent wind or heavy rain falls, his seeds will be wiped off the rock and taken away. As such, these philanthropists do not reap anything from the money and efforts they have spent for the reason that it was not spent on the basis of faith and in the way of Allah and the hereafter.

This group spends and serves the society to show off and compete with others in order to be remembered and praised in the minds of other human beings. If they have a position or appointment such as being a people's lawyer or representative, they serve in order to be elected for another term and if they work in an office, they exert themselves to be promoted to a higher position. In this case, the services of such people do not have the least value and they are not effective in their prosperity in the hereafter.

However, the criterion and standard of good and sound deeds which are a cause of man's prosperity in the hereafter is that the deed must be related to faith and spring from faith and it is

for this reason that in the Holy Qur'an, Allah, the Exalted, has conjoined faith and good deeds:

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِين آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجرِی مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ...

"And give good news to those who have faith and do righteous deeds that for them shall be gardens with streams running in them..."(۱)

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَئِکَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّهِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

And those who have faith and do righteous deeds, they shall be the inhabitants of“ (paradise; they shall remain in it [forever].”(۲

:And elsewhere, it states

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهُ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Whoever acts righteously, [whether] male or female, and is a believer, We shall“ revive him with a good life and pay them their reward by the best of what they used to (do.”(۳

Therefore, the relationship between faith and deeds has to be safeguarded because .only deeds that spring from faith and belief in Allah can be directed towards Allah

الَّذِی یُؤْتِی مَالَهُ یَتَزَکَّی * وَمَا لأَحَدٍ عِنْدَهُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ تُجْزَی * إِلاَّ ابْتِغَاء وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الأَعْلَی

He who gives wealth to purify himself and does not expect any reward from anyone,“ (but seeks the pleasure of His Lord, the Most Exalted.”(۴

Some people spend and give charity, but do not have the intention of sanctimony and attracting the attention of other human beings or seeking their gratitude. Even if the people speak ill of this person, he does not quit his work and spends as Allah has :commanded him

وَيُطْعِمُونَ

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.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۵ -۱

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۸۲ -۲

.Surat al-Nahl ۱۶:۹۷ -۳

.Surat al-Layl ۹۲:۱۸-۲۰ -۴

الطَّعَامَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا * إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لاَ نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاء وَلاَ شُكُورًا

They give food, for the love of Him, to the needy, the orphan and the prisoner“

[saying,] ‘We feed you only for the sake of Allah. We do not want any reward from you (nor any thanks’.”(1)

Therefore, our deeds are sound if they spring from faith and if they are done for Allah, but if they are done without the intention of gaining nearness to Him and they are accompanied by non-divine intentions, they are like a body without a soul whose shape is nicely made but it lacks a soul to give it movement and growth. In addition to not growing, deeds that have no soul breed corruption.

Consequently, it is not correct to believe that every deed that is beneficial to people and is considered as service to the society ought to be perceived as good and commendable without considering its motivation and intention.

That which has been stated is not only characteristic perception of the general population. Some of the educated also consider the criterion of the value and merit of deeds to be outward justice and the deed having been done for the sake of benefiting and serving people although the standard of merit and value of deeds and their effects on human prosperity is something quite different.

A shallow and superficial person conceives the bulk and social effects of a deed as the criterion of judgment but this standard is

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۱- ۷۶:۸-۹ Surat al-Insan.

not divine and Allah does not look at the bulk of deeds. He does not look at how much money has been spent or how much movement and energy has been used. Allah sees how much a deed was performed for Him and it in turn brings about prosperity to that same measure that it is intended for Him.

However, in acts of worship contingent on the intention to gain proximity to Allah, deeds become corrupt even if there is an iota of non-divine intention in them and if someone else is set as a partner with Allah. Obligatory and recommended devotional

deeds have to be completely purified for Allah and if an individual is sanctimonious in these deeds and observes such rites of worship to please people, not only are his deeds corrupt but prohibited and a cause of reproach. Even that part of the deed that is done for Allah will not be accepted. As Allah states:

"I am the best of partners; I do not accept the deeds of a person who sets up another one to be my partner in his deeds."(۱)

Consequently, if a person sets up a partner to Allah in deeds of servitude, Allah gives up his share to that partner and because the deed was not purely for Him the deed goes to waste. It is possible, therefore, for a person to become wretched and ill-fated after years of effort and endeavor. He spends a lifetime acquiring knowledge with the imagination that he is

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۰, p. ۲۴۳.

doing it for Allah but when he carefully examines his intentions, he perceives that he was studying for position or social status—striving for fame and popularity among people.

If such an individual says that he served the people, saved a lot of poor people from destitution, provided medical services to many needy people, built schools and hospitals, Allah will tell him that none of his deeds will grant him benefit because the reward and profit of his deeds is the same praise which the people heaped upon him. The reward of such a person is the hanging of his picture on walls and printing it in magazines and newspapers and the praise which he was paid as a philanthropist and doer of good.

Ultimately, the criterion of value and merit for deeds is connected with the heart—we have to observe the source of the motivation of the deed. Was it on account of love of this world or love of Allah? If it was done for Allah and with purity of intention, it will bring about spiritual ascendance and human perfection, but in other than this case it

is likely to cause decadence and downfall and hindrance of spiritual ascendancy and .human perfection

If that deed is an act of worship, it becomes nullified by hypocrisy and if it is a type of cajolery and not for the intention of gaining proximity to Allah, it loses its value and reward. Hence, the value of every deed is not based on its benefit

.for people or the society, whether an Islamic or non-Islamic society

What is more, the merit of deeds is not only that they ought to be beneficial for the religion and the believers, because all too often man does a deed which is beneficial for the religion but harmful for himself because it was done without purity of intention. In the entire history of Islam, a lot of people did deeds which were good for the religion and sometimes brought about the spread and expansion of religion but these .deeds were not beneficial for them because they were not done with pure intentions

Their intention was perhaps to acquire more land or become more popular and beloved among the people, neither of which brings about spiritual ascendancy or :human perfection. It has been narrated in a hadith that

"Allah sometimes confirms his religion through corrupt people."(۱)

It is possible for corrupt and libertine rulers, for the sake of personal motives and seeking fame as well as expansion of the realm of their rule, to have embarked upon conquests in the course of history which resulted in the spread of religion; however, even if their actions were beneficial for the religion and Islam, they would still not bring any reward to them in the hereafter. For this reason, we have to observe the role of motives and inner intentions and know that value and superiority of deeds derive from divine intentions and that it is possible for a deed to be apparently small

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۱- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۵, p. ۱۹.

but be divine and valuable on account of being done with worthwhile and pure .intentions

The Importance of Integrity in Cultural and Religious Programs

In accordance with this issue, the propagators and exponents of religion have to be attentive to the fact that in the propagation as well as execution of religious programs and the establishment of religious centers and encouragement of others in these issues, their motives and intentions have to be pure. It is possible for them to guide other human beings to the correct way by means of their propagation and advice and to attract people to religious and cultural issues as well as to provide suitable grounds for the promotion of cultural activities and bring about quantitative and qualitative growth in cultural affairs of the society as a result of their efforts at building mosques and establishing religious centers, but they must not imagine that their efforts are .always beneficial and that they certainly reap heavenly reward from them

Such activities are only beneficial and result in spiritual ascendance and human perfection when the aim is Allah. Movement and effort have to be only for the sake of promoting religion and one ought not to have personal intentions in these endeavors. .It is in this case that great prosperity will be granted

However, if a person is impelled to move and make effort by personal and worldly motives, he must not expect any reward from Allah. This point must not be forgotten or a false image developed that a deed is beneficial because it has very

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good results, causing a person to become proud. On the contrary, intentions must be scrutinized so that one not only does not become proud but becomes modest. :Explaining this point, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Allah the Glorified and Honored states, "I do not accept the speech of a" wise person, but that which is in his heart; his intention and aim. If he devotes his will and intention to that which I like and please, I accept his silence as My invocation and

".praise, even if he has not uttered a word

People who have learned wisdom and explain it to others are praised and lauded by human beings and people look upon them with respect. Of course, it is true that people ought to have favorable opinions in regard to others, but the preacher has to observe to what extent he is sure about his own deeds. Are his words accepted by Allah and do they result in his gaining proximity to Him or not? Allah Himself has given the response to this question: He does not have anything to do with wise sayings but .with the motive and intention which is concealed behind words

Allah looks at the inclinations and tendencies of human beings. He looks at whether man's heart is preoccupied by people and winning their praise and pleasure or whether a person only thinks about performing his duty and doing what is expected of him by Allah. People ought not to be concerned with

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whether others are pleased or not. They must not be remiss in discharging obligations .even if the people dislike what they say

Therefore, if one's inclination and tendency is to please Allah, even his silence receives the reward of invocation and praise because his heart is directed at Allah and he wants to do only that which pleases Him. He keeps silence because he conceives the pleasure of Allah is in silence and for this reason, his silence is considered to be worship and all too often silence has more reward than other people's acts of worship .and has greater effects in man's spiritual perfection

A person whose words and deeds are for people and whose heart is directed at them does not attain virtue and rewards whatsoever and his reward is that same praise and laudation which the people heap on him because he has not done anything for .which Allah should grant him reward

With regard to what has been said and knowledge of the pivotal effects of inner motives and inclinations in the essence of deeds, if we observe that a person says

what he distinguishes as his duty, even if the people are averse to it, we ought to know that he has divine motivation and for this reason his deeds and words have .merit

However, if he pays heed to people when talking and avoids saying what is pleasing to Allah because he does not perceive social conditions as favorable and he fears that the people will

p: ۴۱۱

be displeased with what he says, his motivation is not divine and hence his acts are .devoid of value and merit because his attention is on the people

The Importance of Intention and Inner Inclinations

O Abu Dharr! Allah, the Exalted and Honored, does not look at your outer appearance“ ”.and possessions [and what you say], but he looks at your hearts and deeds

Allah does not look at the appearances of people nor does He look at what they say and the claims they make. He does not look at the calluses which develop on people’s foreheads due to prostration nor the clothes which they wear, but he looks at the extent to which their hearts and deeds confirm their claims. He looks at whether that which is in their hearts is better than their outward appearances or, God forbid, their hearts are polluted and contaminated. If their inside is polluted, they are considered .to be hypocrites and do not receive any reward from Allah

This section of the hadith is both shocking and admonishing and serves as a warning that must be taken seriously to cause us to change our opinions about ourselves. [Again, we have to hold favorable opinions in regard to others.] If a person scrutinizes his intentions, he sees that a great deal of his intentions are not divine and pure, or at least that a portion of his intentions are not divine and he has set another as a partner with Allah and Allah has Himself stated that if another is set as His

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.partner, He relinquishes His share to that partner

We ought to observe the intentions and motivations of the words which we utter, the work that we do, the prayers that we perform as well as the advice that we give to other human beings. Do we attend congregational prayers because Allah loves it or do we have other motivations? If our acts of servitude are not pure and non-divine motivations interfere in them, our intentions will not be pure in the rest of our deeds either. In addition to this, if our deeds and devotional responsibilities are not pure, .they will basically be null and void

Such cankers as hypocrisy, pretense and including motivations of the carnal soul in acts of worship are often found to a greater extent in people that have the duty to guide and lead others than in the general population: a laborer and butcher who performs shortened prayers after his daily duties at the end of the day because of .being tired does not usually do so out of hypocrisy

However, for a person that is charged with leading the prayers as an imam and counsels, teaches religious sciences and guides people, the issue of sanctimony and being contaminated by non-divine motivations is a serious danger; in the case that such people become contaminated by hypocrisy, they become doomed both in this .world and the hereafter

Thereafter, in order to express that the apparent conduct, deeds and claims do not denote that a person has piety and that

p: ۴۱۳

piety is an attribute that is found in the hearts of human beings and that the criterion of the superiority of deeds is pure intentions and motivations, the Noble Prophet (S) :points at his chest and states

".O Abu Dharr! Piety is in here. Piety is in here"

Not every person who outwardly does good deeds, performs prayers a lot, recites invocations and provides services to people is pious. His intention and motivation

must be assessed, if they are for Allah, that person is pious; otherwise, he only .simulates piety

Previously we mentioned that sometimes doing good deeds and performing religious and obligatory duties and refraining from forbidden actions is termed as piety and at other times the permanent habit of the soul which is the fountainhead of worthy and good deeds is called piety. Taking this perception into consideration, our acts of worship and good deeds are considered instances of piety when their source and fountainhead is love of Allah and divine intentions. For this reason, we need to have more accurate attention to the foundations of deeds because no deed is done without .an intention

Man's volitional deeds spring from motivations and intentions. It is those motivations that give man the desire to perform deeds and, in reality, those deeds and words are the crystallization of our will and intention. Of course, it is possible for a person to have the intention to perform some deed and to prepare himself to discharge it, but the requisites for doing the deed hinder

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him from doing it. In that case, the spiritual effects of the deed remain in his heart even though in the external world no effect of the deed comes into appearance. That .spiritual effect is a result of those inner intentions and inclinations

The Noble Prophet (S) states that man ought to pay attention to where the motivation of his deeds spring from and where his inner inclination is directed. Is it directed ?towards Allah and His will or at people and worldly reward

If a deed is done with non-divine intentions, even if it is a good and recommendable deed, it will be devoid of spiritual and divine reward and it will not grant man prosperity even if it results in the promotion and expansion of the religion because it is not done with divine intentions which bring about proximity to Allah. Allah looks at the essence of actions and inner intentions for doing deeds. If deeds are divine, He accepts them; otherwise, He rejects those deeds and He does not have anything to

:do with the exterior of deeds

لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهَ لُحُومُهَا وَلاَ دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَى مِنكُمْ...

It is not their flesh or their blood that reaches Allah. Rather, it is your piety that“ (reaches Him...”(١

The Way to Purify Motives and Intentions

Misdeeds have no connection with Allah, but are connected with human beings and the natural world and that which connects a deed to Allah is a person’s intention. With regard to the Noble Prophet’s (S) sayings, it is befitting to observe what motivation

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Surat al-Hajj ۲۲:۳۷ -۱.

impels us to do whatever deed we do and in the case that intentions are not pure, we have to embark upon purifying those intentions; of course, purifying intentions is a difficult task and calls for preparing the grounds and prerequisites.

Along this path, we have to seek the help of Allah first of all and diligently strive to edify our souls and cleanse them of impurities and non-divine inclinations in order for this important issue to be attained by means of ascetic discipline and self-building.

When a person discerns that his intention is not pure and there are non-divine impurities in it, it is likely that he may give up altogether instead of cleansing his intentions. This too is the devil’s trap which hinders man from carrying out his duties. For instance, if he intends to go on a mission of religious propagation, he may perceive that his intentions are not pure and become dissuaded from going as a result. He tells himself that he will not go on the mission of propagation because his intentions are not pure.

This is exactly what the devil wants because man’s duty is to go and propagate the religion and guide people to the truth and if we put aside this obligation as a

consequence of the devil's insinuations, a suitable opportunity is provided for the devil to misguide people even more. For this reason, when we realize that our intentions are not pure, we must not just give up on our duties

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and responsibilities; on the contrary, we should even more diligently strive to purify our intentions.

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About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

Are those who know equal to those who do not know?

al-Zumar: ۹

Introduction:

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ۲۰۰۷, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities in religious, cultural and scientific fields.

Manifesto:

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research

papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

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replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

providing services for seminary and university researchers-

spreading culture study in the publich-

paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies

acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

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merely presenting scientific contents-

mentioning the sources-

.It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

:Other activities of the institute

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.Producing animations, computer games and etc-

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Holding virtual educational courses for the public-

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Also producing four markets named “Ghaemiyeh Book Market” with Android, IOS,-WINDOWS PHONE and WINDOWS editions

:Appreciation

We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable .friends who contributed their help and data to us to reach the holy goal we follow

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